

Hon. Peter Beattie  
The Premier  
PO BOX 185  
Brisbane  
Albert St.  
Qld. 4002

29 April 2005

Dear Premier,

The Main Beach Progress Association Incorporated opposes all proposals for a cruise ship terminal and associated land-based infrastructure and commercial or private construction on the Southport Spit, Broadwater and in the Seaway. This letter outlines some of our objections.

M.B.P.A. Inc. is an organization formed by residents to develop and improve community amenities. Our 'community' consists of residents, traders and small businesses and visitors/tourists from other parts of the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Queensland, interstate and overseas. We believe a cruise ship terminal would have a severe negative environmental, economic and social impact on the Gold Coast community.

The M.B.P.A. has gathered more than 40 years of archival material (see attached summary) documenting the struggles of the Gold Coast community to keep the Southport Spit as public open space. The community has in the past opposed a mineral sands depot (1968), a home-unit and shopping precinct (1987), a film horizon tank (1998) and numerous other proposals since 1961. Every decade volunteers from the community have spent 3-4 years justifying, to successive governments and local councils, the reasons for keeping the Spit as public open space.

The late National Party MP for Southport, Doug Jennings, spent his final years battling overdevelopment of the Spit and the Broadwater even going against his own party's stance on some of the development issues related to the area. At a memorial service for Mr. Jennings in 1988, Father Smith the Rector of St. Peters said 'the Southport Spit will probably become a monument to greed, arrogance, negativity and lack of vision of those who seem incapable of rejoicing in God's gift...we will sadly miss Mr. Jennings efforts to preserve areas of natural beauty.' (GC Bulletin 17 May 1988). Unfortunately Father Smith seems to be correct in his assessment.

The M.B.P.A. believes the Gold Coast City infrastructure including roads, sewerage and water is already under extreme pressure. Over 200,000 tourists who arrive at the Gold Coast each year by road, rail and air have not, for three out of the past four summers, been able to shower at the beach after swimming or surfing because of water shortages. (Residents have had restricted watering for their gardens.) These tourists contribute to the local economy through expenditure on accommodation, entertainment, food, travel etc. staying from 4 days to 4 weeks (or in the case of young travellers and overseas students up to one year). Yet cruise ship passengers who might only spend 4-6 hours on land will be contributing to even greater pressure on our water supply, sewerage and roads without a significant contribution to the local economy. The trucks and heavy service vehicle traffic necessary for a cruise ship will only increase road congestion, noise and other pollution in Main Beach.

Cruise ships release the equivalent emissions of 12,000 cars per day whilst in port. The predominant winds will fan nitrogen and sulphur oxide fumes (due to ship's engines running on the lowest grade diesel-like fuel on the planet) over Biggera Waters and Runaway Bay in the predominant South-easterly winds and over our neighbours in Labrador and Southport in the summer East/North-easterlies. These emissions are known to cause respiratory problems and inflame conditions such as asthma.

The dredging necessary for cruise ships to safely navigate the Seaway will have a negative impact on local recreational industries such as diving, surfing, fishing and boating (see other submissions presented at this meeting). At present the people involved in these activities drift home through Main Beach purchasing coffee, lunch, refreshments, renting DVD's etc. supplementing the patronage of local small businesses by Main Beach residents. A downturn in local trade because of the negation of the above-mentioned recreational activities owing to the presence of a cruise terminal at the Spit would be inevitable.

A report by Ross Klein in 2003, 'Cruising – Out of Control: The Cruise Industry, The Environment, Workers and Maritimes,' finds that:

*'...ports too often see the cruise ship industry as a "cash cow" with money to be made at very little cost. The facts are somewhat different – ports often find that the income expectations are overblown and the costs of hosting a cruise ship are understated.'* ([www.policyalternatives.ca/ns/cruising.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/ns/cruising.pdf))

The current cruise ship proposals for the Gold Coast have either unsubstantiated income expectations or none at all.

The M.B.P.A. liaises closely with the Gold Coast Police through the Neighbourhood Watch Program. We are about to embark upon a Safety Audit for the Main Beach area including the Spit. The police have informally expressed concerns about safety for residents if their focus is divided between two major entertainment areas, Surfers Paradise and a cruise ship dock precinct. The problems in Surfers Paradise at night are already well known and the current cruise ship terminal proposals suggest Navy docking facilities for Australian and U.S. Defense personnel. We have major safety concerns about throwing this sector into the already volatile Surfers Paradise scene or dividing police resources between two 'entertainment' precincts with Main Beach sandwiched between them.

We believe the Gold Coast cruise ship terminal proposals are a veiled attempt to gain long-term lease (and eventually free-hold ownership) of open public space on a prime coastal site for private and commercial use and profit. Little care has been taken in these proposals to ensure the cruise ship component is environmentally or economically sound and will benefit the greater part of the Gold Coast community.

The Beach Protection Authority Queensland, in correspondence to the M.B.P.A. in 2000, stated the following:

*'The Spit on the Gold Coast lies within a designated erosion prone area...landward from the seaward toe of the frontal dune...the width of the erosion prone area is 110 metres between the southern end of the Spit and approximately the northern end of Seaworld, and is then the full width of the Spit up to the northern end..*

*The Authority is generally opposed to the location of any permanent works within the erosion prone area and would recommend that all such land be protected by dedication of the land as a reserve for beach protection and management purposes.'* (see attached)

In 2003 (as a 'Vision 20/20' initiative) the Gold Coast City Council, after months of consultation with 34 representatives from industry, scientific and community groups, passed a resolution which still stands and states 'there will be no further development of the Spit.' (see attached minutes 8th August 2003) And yet the community finds itself again under siege from private consortiums and entrepreneurs trying to acquire land on the Spit.

The Queensland Government wisely cooperated with local council in 2003 to gazette and therefore protect the Federation Walk Coastal Reserve on the eastern side of the Spit. This now provides a beautiful alternative to car access to the northern end of the Spit through the activities of cycling and walking. In addition it contributes to the maintenance of the biodiversity of the area. This reserve is proof that volunteers from the community would prefer to spend their energy planting trees on the Spit rather than researching, lobbying and meeting to argue the merits of public open space for the City of the Gold Coast. We believe the western side of the Spit to the northern end deserves the same kind of protection as Federation Walk Coastal Reserve. It qualifies under numerous criteria within the Resource Planning Guidelines for State Reserves including:

*Coastal management; environmental purposes; open space and buffer zones; parks and gardens; public boat ramps, jetties and landing places; scenic purposes; scientific purposes; sport and recreation.*

Public open space does not discriminate. It is available for the enjoyment and recreation of all people no matter what their socio-economic status, gender, race, age or culture. The private and commercial acquisition of public space does discriminate as it is only available to those who can afford it and the economic benefits fall into few hands.

When we approached people on weekends in the lead up to our recent Save Our Spit Rally (which, incidentally, was attended by well over 2000 people of all ages and backgrounds) I spoke to a family who had just finished snorkeling along the southern seawall of the Seaway. The parents and their 8 and 9 year old son and daughter were involved in an animated conversation about the fish they had just observed on their dive. They engaged me in conversation and let the children describe the angel fish they had observed in the Seaway. The conversation then focused on a fish species they couldn't identify and they agreed to get the fish species book out when they returned home and as a family activity try and identify the 'mystery' fish. This experience would no longer be available after dredging the Seaway for a cruise ship.

We talk in Queensland about the value of the family, encouraging parents to be actively involved in their children's lives, of finding physical activities that will keep our young ones fit rather than becoming obese and of ways to motivate them to improve their literacy levels. This family are the true indicator of a Smart State. We should be investing in such families and their activities rather than the negative environmental and social impact and dubious economic benefits of cruise ships on the Gold Coast. As the family packed up their diving equipment they mentioned they would grab some lunch in Main Beach on the way home. We welcome visitors such as these.

Steve Gratton

For and on behalf of The Main Beach Progress Association Inc. Committee and Members