

Australian CSIRO Report P Gowen letter 08 May 11

Dear Gillian & Naomi,

Thank you for the copy of the CSIRO investigation report summarising the results of stakeholders perceptions of the impacts of an expanding Australian seafloor mining industry, amid which our responses from MARINET were included under the stakeholders contributions.

What I was led to believe was an independent survey leading to a report of the aggregate dredging positioning now appears to me to be a study intended to explore a means of providing the exploiters with information on the trials and tribulations suffered in the USA and the UK in overcoming the hurdles, and thus indicating the means and ways by which Australia could avoid the same pitfalls, so to forge ahead with expansion. No doubt this has been precipitated by the opportunity of a wider market by export to Japan's need, which country has just ceased to dredge aggregate off their own coastline due to awareness of the growing economic and environmental damage suffered in the UK. (Note, Holland much earlier ceased such offshore dredging, and imports aggregate from Britain to make up the shortfall).

Your survey response summary is certainly (as quoted in the report) all about Stakeholders perceptions and understanding of how to handle the public reactions to help facilitate offshore aggregate and little or nothing about the negative damaging effects to the marine environment or effects on coastal erosion, and hence seems to us to have been performed with the interests of the dredging lobby as the baseline. Probably you were using their funding too ?

Am I correct in thinking that it's implied that the objectors are those who ignore scientific evidence despite the fact that we have clearly shown that it's the dredging industry and the government bodies who will not take aboard independent reports evidencing the impact by the dredging industry further benefiting government coffers, and favouring exclusively only those reports constructed and selected to support the continuity of the dredging industry ?

Furthermore, although mention is made of the resulting shoreline erosion, no content has been included of the impact that this has upon the shoreline industries and businesses dependent upon maintaining beaches, nor upon those who are losing their coastal homes, nor the loss of amenity and the natural environment. The other main damaging impact, that of the dredging destroying the marine eco-system, the spawning, refuge and feeding areas that are provided by the very coarse sand and gravel that is removed by dredging, so seriously impacting the fishing industry. All this, has gone unmentioned also.

As an example I could quote that you have printed the views of a "scientist" who states that beach "nourishment" is the "most benign method of protecting the shore" when international research studies clearly show the very opposite. Why not at the very least refer to alternate findings to permit a balanced view to be formed ?

You have failed to give content to coastal Europe and Japan who have ceased such dredging as still experienced in the UK and US due to the seriously damaging impact it

has, but adequately provide the views of those who are most probably selected, appointed and paid to give supportive reports claiming dredging to be benign.

It is to be hoped that your organisation will now provide to the Australian government, through comprehensive research and a full paper study, showing previous work, the full environmental, social, ethical, economic and human rights aspects of offshore aggregate mining, fully relating the consequences suffered by this country, rather than just refer to the claims made by powerful vested interests to relate these to suggestions as to how the opposition to Marine Aggregate Dredging may be overcome. Perhaps such may encourage the government to fully fund independent studies and seek more environmentally sound and economical options to offshore aggregate dredging for beach fill and to provide the needs for your own construction industry.

We would not wish to see Australia suffer the damage wrought in the fishing industry, the shore and beach holiday trade, the loss of wildlife areas and coastal housing brought about here by a lack of full understanding of the consequences of offshore aggregate dredging.

With regards and best wishes,

Pat Gowen - MARINET & NSAG