

LAND COURT OF QUEENSLAND

REGISTRY: Brisbane

NUMBERS: MRA428-14, EPA429-14
MRA430-14, EPA431-14
MRA432-14, EPA433-14

Applicant: **ADANI MINING PTY LTD**
AND

First Respondent: **LAND SERVICES OF COAST AND COUNTRY**
INC
AND

Second Respondent: **CONSERVATION ACTION TRUST**
AND

Statutory Party: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE, DEPARTMENT OF**
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE
PROTECTION

LAY WITNESS STATEMENT

I, Athony Wayne Fontes, dive operator in the Whitsunday region of the Great Barrier Reef, in the State of Queensland, sincerely and solemnly state that:

1. I have been a dive instructor trainer in the Witsundays since 1981, logged over 10,000 dives on the Great Barrier Reef and trained over 1,800 instructor candidates.
2. I have owned and operated a Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) 5-Star Instructor Development Centre on the Great Barrier Reef for 15 years.
3. For nine years I was a member of the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee, which advised the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
4. I am currently chairman of the Whitsunday Local Marine Advisory Committee which advises the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on the local marine park issues.
5. I have a direct commercial interest in the ongoing health of coral reefs on the Great Barrier Reef and the tourism associated with the health of coral reefs in Queensland.

Witness statement

Filed on behalf of the First Respondent

Solicitor: Sean Ryan
Environmental Defenders Office
(Qld) Inc

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6. My statement is to be provided to Land Services of Coast and Country Inc for use in its objection to the proposed Carmichael Coal Mine.

Experience of climate change

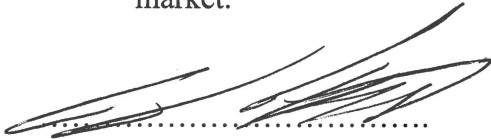
7. Over the 34 years I have been diving on the Great Barrier Reef I have noted significant changes to the reef that I strongly believe are related to climate change.
8. The most notable change involves coral bleaching brought on by unusually high water temperatures. I have noted small, isolated coral bleaching events over a number of years (since the early 1980's) but the number of bleaching events has definitely increased over the years. As well, the duration of the events and the amount of coral bleached has increased. The most notable bleaching events occurred in the summers of 1998 and 2002. These bleaching events coincided with major bleaching events throughout the Great Barrier Reef as well as coral reefs around the world.
9. In both years, a number of our island dive sites and outer reef dive sites suffered a significant amount of bleaching but only a small amount of actual coral mortality.
10. As a result we had to shift to other primary dive sites, and there were less dive sites to choose from as a result of the widespread bleaching.
11. I have observed that the more experienced divers tend not return to my business after visiting lower quality dive sites.
12. A second possible impact on our region related to climate change is severe weather events, primarily cyclones. Over the years, we have had our share of cyclones in the Whitsunday region. Although very damaging to coral reefs, the reefs tended to bounce back in time. However, over the past decade and in particular, the last four years, the local reefs are not bouncing back as quickly as they have in the past. This is most obvious around the island reefs where two of the top three dive sites in the Whitsundays, Manta Ray Bay at Hook Island and Blue Pearl Bay at Hayman Island, were reduced to little more than coral rubble and show little recovery after four years.
13. These were also our prime dive sites.
14. The consequence of the destruction of these island reefs has been a reduction in the number of dive sites available to my business.

Anticipated consequences of predicted climate change

15. If the predictions of climate change science, such as those set out in the most recent Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change reports are accurate, I believe the effects of climate change on Great Barrier Reef tourism and in particular, diving and snorkelling, will be devastating.
16. The Great Barrier Reef is a World Heritage Area and I believe one of the best diving and snorkelling sites on the planet. Quite literally, divers and snorkellers come from around the world and Australia to visit the reef for

one reason; to see coral and fish. If there are no coral or fish, then there will be no people. If there is a significant reduction in the quality of the coral and fish then there will be a significant reduction in the number of visitors. In the Whitsundays, I have already heard visitors comment on the quality of reef, such as that it is not as colourful or vibrant as expected, or much of it looks dead, etc.

17. In my experience many people that have visited the reef in the past, perhaps 10 years ago, when they return they are actually shocked at the reduction in reef quality they see today.
18. If the climate science plays out as predicted, more bleaching events and more severe cyclones, the quality of the reef will drop way below visitor expectations and this will undoubtedly lead to a much reduced tourism market.



Tony Fontes

Date: 20/11/14