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# RED TAPE MADNESS

## High-level government reports on FNQ's future lie under wraps

CAIRNS is becoming a bureaucratic hospice where government reports go to die – or at the very least grow old, decrepit and smothered under procedural cobwebs.

High-level reports sitting on administrators' desks are piling up as the region waits for answers on issues critical to its future growth and prosperity.

Ports North's masterplan for the Cairns marine precinct was launched in July 2019 and due last year.

Its release was pushed back in September to the first quarter of 2021, with COVID-19 blamed for the delay.

That extended due date is just a fortnight from reaching its end, and the deadline has now been pushed back again to a unspecific "midyear 2021".

It is in fine company with a review of the State Emergency Service still not made public despite being finished in July last year. The state government also has refused to release a completed engineering report into the dilapidated Barron River Bridge at Kuranda.

The Smallbone Report into horrific child sexual abuse and violence in west Cairns and Aurukun was commissioned by former Labor premier Anna Bligh in 2011 and delivered to LNP premier Campbell Newman in 2013, but not made public until three years later.

However, its recommendations have passed through four consecutive ministers without being put into action.

The state government has committed \$1.5m to a preliminary business case looking into the Cairns University Hospital expansion plan for this financial year. Less than four months remain and that study has not begun, and likely cannot until the land required to build the facility has been bought.

There appears to be some movement at the station for at least one of the sectors awaiting a stalled report. A Ports North spokeswoman said work to expand commercial and Defence operations in the Cairns marine precinct was pushing ahead — even if the fine details were not public.

"Ports North has finalised its position on the opportunities for HMAS Cairns wharf expansion and the planning to define infrastructure and land site investigation footprint for Cairns marine precinct and HMAS expansion," she said.

"This important piece of work enabled the state government to announce a \$30m commitment in December 2020 to grow our marine precinct, that also provided opportunities for HMAS expansion."

Douglas Shire Council Mayor Michael Kerr has urged the state government to release the SES review report as a matter of urgency: "Douglas has been lucky this year to have escaped any real impacts from (cyclones), so it is concerning to know there is a report detailing recommendations for improvements to disaster management just sitting on a shelf."

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