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# \$120M WAVE FOR PORT

## Green light for dredging opens way for bigger ships and jobs

BIGGER cruise ships will be steaming into Cairns next year after the Federal Government granted its final approvals to dredge Trinity Inlet.



Picture: COSTA CRUISES

**BIG DEAL: The 294m cruise ship Costa Luminosa, anchored off Yorkeys Knob, will be able to dock at Cairns after dredging.**

Nothing legally now stands in the way of 1 million cubic metres of dredge spoil being taken from the shipping channel in order to bring in ships up to 300m long. THE final hurdle to capital dredging in Trinity Inlet has finally been scaled with the Federal Government issuing its environmental approvals.

No legal obstacle now stands in the way of 1 million cubic metres of dredge spoil being sucked from the shipping channel in order to bring in the biggest cruise ships ever to berth at the city's port.

Getting the green light took nine months – a process fraught with finger-pointing over who was responsible for the delay – but it is over.

Ports North has a sevenmonth window between March and October next year to complete the \$120 million project, due to start in May and take 12 weeks to complete.

It means up to 900,000 cubic metres of soft clay may legally be pumped to developer Tom Hedley's Northern Sands quarry with a further 100,000 cubic metres of stiff clay used to build up industrial land at Tingira St in Portsmith.

The blame game is ongoing, with state Cairns MP Michael Healy and Federal Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch adamant responsibility falls in the other's court.

"We've been working hard to get this project underway, and it's a relief that the Federal Government is no longer an obstacle to this major port upgrade," Mr Healy said.

Mr Entsch said the delay was forced at the request of the Queensland Government.

Politics aside, the project means larger and more cruise ships – up to 100 by 2031 – will be able to pull into Cairns, as well as larger defence and commercial vessels.

"It will also see the establishment of a new shipping swing basin to enable future expansion of the HMAS Cairns Navy and see upgrade to existing wharves infrastructure," Mr Entsch said.

"The project will support 195 full-time jobs during construction and create 1535 ongoing support jobs to deal with the boost in the number of tourists visiting the region.

"More importantly, this project will inject up to \$1 billion into the local economy through increased expenditure."

Mr Healy said the final tick proved the State Government was delivering on its election promises.

"Now our next plan is the Cairns Convention Centre (extension)," he said.

Mr Entsch said the State Government could apply to expand dredging to 4.4 million cubic metres to be considered under the current environmental impact statement, since it was created before the Reef 2050 Plan was introduced,



"The one non-negotiable is that they would have to find a land-based solution," he said.

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