

# Foreign backing unease for hub

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THE designation of Cairns port as a critical piece of defence infrastructure has called into question potential foreign investment for the State Government's global tourism hub casino venture.

Former Australian Army chief Lieutenant-General (Ret) John Grey said the new federal classification revealed by the *Cairns Post* on Saturday could have serious implications under Section 51 of the Constitution, where the states relinquish powers over foreign affairs and defence to the Commonwealth Government.

"It forms a framework for the Commonwealth to look across the port of Cairns to assure that its development is appropriate from a security infrastructure perspective," he said.

"That means there are some implications for local planning – obviously Ports North have got to look at that very carefully.

"They've got to report to the secretary of the Department of Home Affairs about their masterplanning and any changes that take place.

"For example, I think we would be very concerned now to see a move where a foreign power suddenly tried to buy up

either our marine precinct, or some of the shipyards operating in that precinct."

A spokesman for Tourism Minister Kate Jones said the designation would have no impact on the global tourism hub project.

"The model proposed for the global tourism hub is that the state owns the land and leases it to the operator, which is exactly the same delivery model as we've got in Queen's Wharf in Brisbane," he said.

A Ports North spokeswoman said Cairns was now among 20 Australian ports on the Federal Government's critical infrastructure list.

She said the Cairns marine precinct's updated masterplanning project still had a long way to run.

"Ports North's port masterplanning project is in the early stages of planning and is expected to run through until the end of 2019," she said.

"The project will involve extensive consultation with stakeholders and port users in order to prepare a comprehensive analysis and assessment of issues and opportunities.

"This consultation will include all levels of government."

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