Ships and Shorebirds: a case study on a constructed roost site at the Port of Brisbane

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The Port of Brisbane is located adjacent to Moreton Bay Marine Park, an area of high conservation and ecological value. Each September some 50,000 migratory shorebirds travel the East-Australasian Flyway to Moreton Bay. The significance of Moreton Bay for these shorebirds has been recognised through the declaration of several Ramsar-protected areas within the Bay.

The reclamation paddocks created through the continued growth of the Port has seen the area become a significant roosting site, with more than 10,000 shorebirds using these areas during the peak of the migratory season. The Corporation has actively managed these areas, mindful of the need to expand the port whilst acknowledging the significance of the shorebirds and the habitat created by the reclamation process. However, as the port expands and reclamation works are completed, the available roost sites will be significantly reduced.

In recognition of this fact, the Corporation has designed, constructed and now manages one of the largest constructed shorebird roosting sites in Australia. This site is unique in several ways, including its combination of conservation and educational values, innovative site management techniques and full disabled access to the hides within the site. The balance between port operational efficiency, sound planning and environmental stewardship has seen this 12-hectare site become a favoured site for both migratory shorebirds and keen bird watchers.

This paper presents the planning, design and construction challenges faced by the Port of Brisbane Corporation in developing this unique site within one of Australia's fastest growing ports. It discusses the site's design and construction issues, outlines the process of community engagement and business acceptance in relation to striking a balance between development and conservation.