



# River precinct rejected

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 ASSISTANT EDITOR

THE State Government has backed away from a threat to override Moreton Regional Council and approve a \$628 million residential, marina, golf course and business precinct on the Caboolture River.

The future of the project is now likely to be settled in the Land Court.

The decision is a major victory for the Moreton Regional Council, whose feisty mayor Allan Sutherland threatened to "declare war" on the Bligh Government if it approved the massive project against the council's wishes.

Council last year voted against the eastern half of the proposal, including the marina, fearing dredging would result in sediment run-off harmful to

Moreton Bay marine park green zones.

The project would endanger fish and koala habitats and disrupt resting places for migratory birds protected under international treaties.

Council experts also warned of bank erosion caused by boats and flooding in low-lying areas.

Planning Minister Stirling Hinchliffe initially sought ways to allow the project to proceed.

Following a public outcry, he signalled the retreat yesterday when he said he would not declare the North Harbour plan a "prescribed project" – a move that would have taken the approval process out of the hands of the council. The backflip followed community outrage against the plan.

Cr Sutherland said Mr

Hinchliffe's decision was a victory for the environment and a victory for common sense.

He was in a dinghy travelling up the river with a television crew when he heard the news. "I have tears in my eyes," he said. "It means an independent umpire will now decide."

He said the council would present a strong case.

"The environmental damage would have been unthinkable," he said.

"But this is not a victory for Allan Sutherland. It is a victory for the critters of Moreton Bay."

Cr Sutherland said he was heartened by the extraordinary public support for the council, especially from Green groups and fishermen.

Mr Hinchliffe said: "I have decided not to declare the

Northeast Business Park a prescribed project under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971.

"The state considered intervening in this project to ensure a damaging standoff between council and the developer would not seriously delay final assessment." This is despite the state Co-ordinator-General's strong support for the project.

"Having consulted with key stakeholders I am of the view that arguments provided were not sufficiently compelling given the project type and stated prospects in the Planning and Environment Court process to prescribe this project," Mr Hinchliffe said.

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**COURT BOUND:** An artist's impression of the controversial \$628 million North Harbour project