

# Robust approach to sustainability

Jason Sprott explains why the detailed materiality assessment undertaken by an Australian port operator has set up its new sustainability strategy for success

**D**alrymple Bay Coal Terminal in Queensland has recently completed work on its sustainability strategy - the latest addition to the suite of strategies within the Australian port sector.

From DBCT's perspective, sustainability is about "creating a balance between economic prosperity, protecting the environment, looking after our people and fostering meaningful partnerships with our community and beyond".

A joint statement from the CEOs of both DBCT and the owner, Dalrymple Bay Infrastructure Management, highlights the sensitive nature of its operations located within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

"We are acutely aware of the great responsibility that comes with managing and operating the terminal alongside and within an area of unique importance, and are dedicated to ensuring our systems, processes and initiatives promote environmental stewardship."

This focus was also confirmed by the responses the terminal operator received to its detailed materiality assessment. Environmental management within the GBRWHA and water quality management featured heavily in the top ten priority issues for stakeholders.

## HOW DOES THAT TRANSLATE INTO ACTION?

The partnership approach used in the development of the DBCT sustainability strategy has set the organisations up for success - as both parties understand the importance of working together to achieve the desired results.

Critically, it used the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a foundation - including a detailed analysis of alignment and performance against this globally accepted platform. Work in this area determined that of the 17 goals under the SDG framework, 14 were seen as more relevant than others to DBCT's operation and approach to sustainability.

The strategy is consistent with the method outlined in the guide recently released by Ports Australia including the following stages of development: gap analysis; materiality assessment; strategy development; and finalisation/communication.

## THE DIFFERENCE MATERIALITY MAKES

Of great significance was the comprehensive approach to materiality assessment undertaken as part of the strategy development process. Including both internal and external stakeholders, an online survey and detailed face-to-face interviews with stakeholders, the materiality assessment process was one the largest ever undertaken in this type of work within the Australian port sector.

Interviews were conducted with local residents, supply chain participants, government agencies, financial representatives and board members of both organisations.

Discussions were also held with local residents from Hay Point itself, through to raw material 'consumers' in the Netherlands in western Europe.

In total, 409 internal and external stakeholders responded to the online materiality survey, which the partners used in determining their key issues to be taken forward into the strategy development phase of the project.

The top ten priority issues coming out of the materiality assessment phase included: terminal safety, dredge management in the GBRWHA, water quality management, protecting World Heritage values, environmental management systems, regulatory compliance, proactive safety programs, terminal efficiency, risk management systems and health and wellbeing.

The importance of undertaking such an exhaustive and robust materiality assessment process cannot be overstated - it helped shaped the final strategy and ensure the forward-looking action plan was appropriately focused and right-sized for the operation.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The DBCT work represents a solid example of a modern sustainability strategy - one which captures a range of existing initiatives whilst ensuring a strong focus across people, environment, financial and stakeholder issues in forward years. ■