

# Caring for LAND & SEA



**Monica Birkner**

**POSITION** Southern Ports (WA), general manager sustainability

**PORTS SECTOR CAREER** 18 months

## What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?

The sustainability of our sector is contingent on three important pillars – protection of our environment, investment in sustainable infrastructure and our workforce culture.

The natural environments we operate in are some of the most beautiful in the world and of course will continue to need careful management and protection. But just as importantly, we need to ensure that our port cities are liveable and remain prosperous for future generations.

Developing port infrastructure that can adapt to growth and support increasing trade across the globe is integral to a sustainable future.

Building a workforce culture that is future-focused will also be crucial. As COVID-19 has shown, our workforce must be adaptable, resilient, and capable of navigating through the challenges and disruptions we'll face in the years ahead.

## What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?

After adopting a number of sustainability projects at each of our ports, we recently embarked on the development of a whole-of-business sustainability strategy. We're focused on developing a strategy that captures the hearts and minds of our staff and stakeholders, with a clear vision and future focus.

## What does the "sustainable port industry of the future" look like to you?

A sustainable port industry of the future will harness the technological capabilities and efficiencies that will be available to us. The standards we set ourselves as an industry will be higher than ever – from skills development and safety to green energy and zero emissions.

Jason Sprott speaks to some outstanding women leading the way in maritime sustainability, who between them have nearly 60 years' experience in the ports sector



**Melinda Loudon**

**POSITION** Port of Townsville, environment manager channel upgrade project

**PORTS SECTOR CAREER** 19 years

## What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?

Climate change and maintaining healthy waterways are priorities given our location in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. We are working alongside our port and regional communities to respond strongly and proactively to these challenges.

## What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?

Being involved in the development of our *Port Vision 2050*, which is an ambitious and achievable blueprint for the Port of Townsville's next 30 years of operations. We are striving to be world leaders in port sustainability. This is my favourite project as it marked a transition point for the port where sustainability became an embedded practice and expectation for

every area of our business, not just the responsibility of one or two departments.

**What does the “sustainable port industry of the future” look like to you?**

Connected. True sustainability is working with our partner organisations (both on land and at sea), our neighbours, our communities and of course, our people. Ports are a connection point in so many ways, which is a real strength for finding unique solutions on the ground. Momentum has been building in this area and there are so many exciting and innovative initiatives both in Australia and other ports around the world.



**Margaret Barbouttis**  
**POSITION** Ports Australia,  
 policy and operations director  
**PORTS SECTOR CAREER**  
 18 months

**What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?**

Sustainability is imperative across the ports sector. The industry is focused on a wealth of matters that deal with short-term sustainability such as enabling crew changes and long-term sustainability such as continued operational efficiency, supporting maritime training (with an emphasis on talent diversity), and planning for vessel fuel transitions and new market opportunities like hydrogen.

**What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?**

Whilst I came in at the latter end of the project, the

*Port Sustainability Strategy Development Guide* has been an exceptionally valuable project. It provides a practical methodology which many of the Australian ports have or are now employing to develop robust sustainability strategies, and has garnered much interest internationally as well, earning runner up for the Governance and Ethics award at the International Association of Ports and Harbors Sustainability Awards 2021.

**What does the “sustainable port industry of the future” look like to you?**

To me, a sustainable port industry of the future is embedded in a sustainable supply chain of the future. It will build on current industry action and will take the form of sustainability strategies at the individual port level, at the national and international industry level, and importantly work towards integrated sustainability with the rest of the supply chain.



**Renée McGlashan**  
**POSITION** Sprott Planning & Environment,  
 senior consultant  
**PORTS SECTOR CAREER** 14 years

**What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?**

Like other industries, the challenge for the port industry will be determining how it will tackle global issues like climate change, understanding and influencing supply chains, third party emissions and transitioning from fossil fuels, while continuing to look after its people. Ports have the ability to influence port operators and collaborate with the port community to unlock tremendous opportunities to put the port industry in a leading position on a sustainable future.



**Our industry is blessed with people who care deeply about its future. We should be very proud.**

**Jason Sprott**, Sprott Planning & Environment

**What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?**

Each time we go in to develop a sustainability strategy, it is about getting to know the story of each port or terminal organisation. What becomes inspirational is seeing mindsets shift into “sustainability thinking” and clients taking on opportunities that suddenly become possible when framed with a long-term sustainability vision.

**What does the “sustainable port industry of the future” look like to you?**

I see a future for the port industry with endless potential. Tapping into the greater port community, there are opportunities to collaborate and transition the port landscape with renewable technologies, green buildings and biodiverse-rich corridors. Innovative solutions to tackle climate change, build resilient infrastructure, inspire ethical supply chains and cargo, will drive the port industry to a leading position. The future of the port industry will be about conquering net zero, empowering people and building a sustainable future collaboratively.



**Susan McLeod**

**POSITION** TasPorts, senior environmental advisor  
**PORTS SECTOR CAREER** 4 years

**What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?**

I think the key sustainability challenges for the ports sector are creating sustainable communities and improving supply chain efficiencies, ensuring climate action and ocean health. Sustainability should be considered as a whole-of-business concept encompassing more than environmental concerns, because it’s actually about maintaining our social licence to operate. We need to ensure the port brings value to the immediate communities we operate in, as well as the broader supply chain.

**What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?**

I’m currently involved in an exciting opportunity to embed sustainability into a significant development at the Port of Devonport, one of our major commercial ports. This \$240-million project has presented the opportunity to set new goals and environmental standards for procurement, infrastructure standards, contractor management as well as operations that will be implemented over the next five years.

**What does the “sustainable port industry of the future” look like to you?**

Finding great ways to deliver benefits to the local communities and the wider economy and country whilst actively minimising the localised impacts of the port facilities. This requires operating outside the normal area of port control and direct responsibility by being more involved in collaborative work and systems thinking. Just like the role diversity plays in our ecosystem health, I believe diverse ideas and diverse workforces are critical for sustainability and thriving regions. ■



**Julie Keane**

**POSITION** North Queensland Bulk Ports, principal development advisor  
**PORTS SECTOR CAREER** 18 years

**What do you believe are the key sustainability issues for the ports sector?**

The port industry needs to embrace the role that Traditional Owners have in sustainable land and sea management of our ports and the contribution they can make through traditional knowledge.

**What is an important sustainability project you have worked on?**

The most rewarding has been the development and implementation of the NQBP *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*. The RAP grew from almost two decades of working with traditional owners at NQBP to manage cultural heritage, culturally sensitive environments and provide opportunities for employment and development for Aboriginal organisations and businesses.

**What does the “sustainable port industry of the future” look like to you?**

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a sustainable port industry seeks to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth, supporting employment diversity and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.