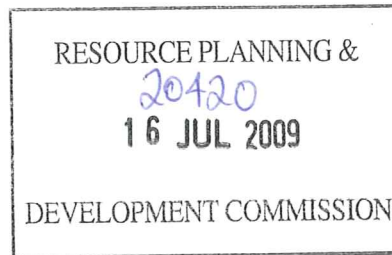




**Birds Australia**  
CONSERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

ABN 87 004 076 475  
Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester St, Carlton VIC 3053  
Tel (03) 9347 0757 Fax (03) 9347 9323  
Email: mail@birdsaustralia.com.au  
Website: www.birdsaustralia.com.au



14<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Keyran Pitt QC  
Chair, Lauderdale Quay Assessment Panel  
RPDC  
GPO Box 1691  
Hobart TAS 7001

### The Validity of Inclusion of Ralph's Bay in the South Arm Important Bird Area

Dear Sir,

I am writing to correct a possible misunderstanding of the process that has led to the inclusion of the north-eastern shoreline of Ralph's Bay in the South Arm Important Bird Area. Specifically, Counsel representing the Walker Corporation Pty Ltd may have led the Panel to conclude that Birds Australia's opposition to the proposed development led to the area's designation as an Important Bird Area (IBA). Quite the reverse is true. The Ralphs Bay area's importance for Australian Pied Oystercatchers makes it a site of global significance for this species and this leads to our concerns over the impacts of the proposed development.

A program to identify and subsequently conserve the world's most significant sites for birds, called the Important Bird Areas Program, is an initiative of the global conservation organisation BirdLife International. Birds Australia is the BirdLife International Partner in Australia. Since 2005, we have been funded by a corporate partner, Rio Tinto, to identify and map Australia's IBAs. Before a site is included in the global register of IBAs, it must be demonstrated that it meets at least one of the four criteria. These criteria, devised by Birdlife International, are scientifically-based, robust and consistently-applied by Birdlife Partners throughout the world to ensure consistency among declared IBAs. IBAs are accepted not just by the world conservation community, but in some parts of the world are used by Governments to delineate sites whose conservation status is protected under legislation.

The relevant IBA criterion for Ralph's Bay is: A4i Congregations (Waterbirds). This is based on criterion 6 of the Ramsar Convention which states: **A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.** The authority BirdLife International uses for official population size for waterbirds is Delany and Scott, "Waterbird Population Estimates." Published by Wetlands International, the most recent edition (2006) records the global population of Australian Pied Oystercatchers as 11,000, 1% of which is 110. As Ralph's Bay regularly supports more than 110 individuals of this species, it meets the criterion for inclusion as an IBA, and indeed as a Ramsar Wetland.


Threats to the conservation status of sites proposed for inclusion in the IBA register are not considered in the assessment process used by Birds Australia. The data supporting the nomination are scrutinized by Birds Australia staff and a Technical Panel of ornithologists appointed by Birds Australia. If the site meets IBA criterion A4, as in this case, its edges are then delineated based upon physical or biological boundaries. Factors such as land tenure, land use zoning or proposed development are not considered. The IBA Technical Panel then reports to Birds Australia's Research and Conservation Committee that the nominated site meets the IBA criteria. The Research and Conservation Committee considers the report and if it agrees with the Technical Panel, recommends to Birds Australia's Council that they accept the site as an IBA.

The final step in this process is that Council's decision is considered by a Technical Panel of BirdLife International in Cambridge UK to ensure the nomination and assessment process is transparent and that the criteria are applied consistently around the world. The BirdLife International staff involved are delighted with the degree of rigor imposed on the IBA assessment process by Birds Australia.

Birds Australia is concerned that our IBA program be seen for what it is: a scientifically-based program to use our knowledge of bird distribution and abundance to define those sites most important for birds, and by implication their conservation. Independence of the assessment process from concerns over direct threats is the great power of this approach.

The area in which the Lauderdale Quay development is proposed clearly and unambiguously meets globally-accepted criteria as an internationally important wetland. To suggest otherwise can only be to imply a cynical manipulation of the process by Birds Australia, which we strenuously deny and to which we vigorously object.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Hamilton', written in a cursive style.

Dr Graeme Hamilton  
CEO  
Birds Australia