

PROPOSED AGL / APA GAS IMPORT PROJECT
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) (RAP)
Crib Point Inquiry and Advisory Committee

Opening Statement

- 1.1 Firstly, we would like to thank the Panel and its broader team for the work it has done to date in getting the proceeding started under these incredibly difficult circumstances. It is a challenge to do this work away from the usual practice of being in hearing rooms.
- 1.2 The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) represent the traditional owners of the land and waters that extend over a large part of the area covered by this project. Our Elders will give a brief talk to Country in a minute. A formal welcome will occur once we are able to be on Country in person.
- 1.3 The BLCAC has made a submission (No.2870).
- 1.4 The BLCAC have supplied three expert statements. They are from Robert Ogden, a senior Bunurong Traditional Owner; Bradley Ward, an archaeologist; and Dr David Tutchener, Principal Cultural Values Consultant.
- 1.5 Much of the area of this proposed development is on Bunurong Country, which includes Westernport Bay. Country is not a dry scientific or descriptive issue for the Bunurong. It is their past, their present, and their future. The ancestral legacy is one they hold most dearly, and is materially present in many locations - and spiritually present across all of their land and waters.
- 1.6 The submission on behalf of the Bunurong has one central theme and that is that the interests of the traditional owners have not been completely or adequately assessed. That work is still ongoing, and has been the subject of concerns that are set out in the submission.
- 1.7 Best practice for projects of this type and scale, would dictate that this foundational work be done at the very beginning of the project, where the overall risks to all interests are at their lowest.

- 1.8 What we do see is that there is a large-scale project that has been advanced to the point that it has - without the impacts on the traditional owners being either finalised or resolved. It is telling and indeed unfortunate that we know more about the impact of wake wash from large ships, than we do about what it means to its First Peoples.
- 1.9 We must get this right. In recent times we have seen the inexcusable destruction of the utterly irreplaceable sites at Juukan Gorge in Western Australia. There is a long history of site destruction and desecration in this country, but to have something like this occur today - is incredibly disturbing.
- 1.10 Travesties like this happen because what is important to traditional owners, is too often poorly considered, poorly understood, and in fact completely lost, in the rush to roll out a particular project. Destruction or damage is given a permissive character that is in no way a true reflection of the values or opinions of traditional owners.
- 1.11 Our aim is to assist the Panel to understand the importance of Country to the Bunurong and enlighten it as to how this project will impact not just in 2020, but for generations into the future.
- 1.12 We do hope that it is possible to get on Country and illustrate some of the points made in the submissions.
- 1.13 I will ask Robert Ogden and two of our Elders to make some brief remarks about Country. We support the Panel undertaking what is a challenging and difficult task.

Submitted by:

Dr Sean Sexton

Operations Manager



12 October 2020