

**IN THE MATTER OF THE  
CRIB POINT GAS IMPORT JETTY AND PIPELINE PROJECT  
INQUIRY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**OPENING SUBMISSION**

1. This submission is made on behalf of Save Westernport Inc. ('Save Westernport') in its unrepresented capacity.

**ABOUT SAVE WESTERNPORT**

2. Save Westernport was formed in early 2018 by local residents who deeply value the ecology of Westernport Bay and its significant Ramsar wetlands. Since then Save Westernport has grown significantly and now has over 16,000 active supporters.<sup>1</sup>
3. As an independent environmental group embedded in local community, Save Westernport represents and protects Westernport Bay's sensitive marine and coastal ecosystems and surrounding communities from heavy industrialisation and the accelerating impact of climate emergency.
4. Our belief in the value of a healthy environment for future generations places it beyond monetary considerations— no amount could begin to offset its degradation or compensate for its loss.
5. Save Westernport continues 50 years of community fighting to protect the Bay against destructive industrial incursion. Beginning in the 1970s, the Save Westernport Coalition successfully stopped repeated attempts to establish new industrial projects in Westernport, including plans for a nuclear power plant on French Island, a bitumen plant and a urea depot.
6. With little industrial development since the 1970s, the Port of Hastings – never naturally deepwater – cannot be regarded as a major port, especially once the BP/Shell refinery at Crib Point closed in the mid-1980s.

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<sup>1</sup> See Submission 3129.

7. A 2013 push for the Port of Hastings to become a container port was actively resisted by the community, now led by the Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council, and resulted in rejection of the plan by Infrastructure Victoria in 2017.
8. Because of the work of committed people, the destruction of Westernport Bay has largely, to date, been prevented. While still facing threats from run-off, sea level rise and a growing population on its shores, the Bay is considered to be generally healthy.

### **THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND THE COMMUNITY**

9. The Westernport community first became aware of the proponents' gas project plans in August 2017 – after Westernport Bay had been chosen as the site.
10. Many in our community swim, fish, surf, dive and snorkel in Westernport Bay. We walk and run and cycle along its coast. We kayak or paddle SUPs or boat across its waters. We relax on the beach or in the bush; we picnic and camp; we birdwatch and look for other wildlife. We photograph and draw in the open air.
11. We celebrate in our environment, and we take solace from it. We use the Bay to heal or to meditate or for yoga. We need it for our physical and social wellbeing, recognised by the concepts of 'blue health' and 'blue care'.
12. We tend to the Bay and its environs, helping to protect it from harm. We plant and weed and labour voluntarily to conserve native flora and fauna. We pick up rubbish on the beach and teach our children not to trample the sand dunes or disturb the plovers. We celebrate our koalas and dolphins and weedy seadragons on social media.
13. Since the project became public, there has been an outpouring of opposition and expressions of love for this environment – online stories, videos, music, photos, art, demonstrations, stalls, tireless fund raising and donations for legal costs.
14. A spokesperson for the proponent said on television that if the local community accepted the project they would be 'taking one for the team'. We reject the entire premise of that statement and say: your project is not needed here, and it is not welcome here.
15. Further, aware of the proponent's track record on pollution and safety, and insulted by the extremely poor stakeholder engagement we have experienced, we say that the proponents have no social licence, and they never will.

16. Save Westernport is represented by Environmental Justice Australia with regard to the issues addressed in the Opening Submission made on behalf of Environment Victoria, Save Westernport and the Victorian National Parks Association ('the Joint Opening Submission').
17. In addition to the matters raised in the Joint Opening Submission, Save Westernport will address the following issues in its own capacity, based on the direct experience and knowledge of its members and supporters:
- a. community impacts concerning the project process;
  - b. amenity impacts; and
  - c. vegetation impacts.
18. Save Westernport will also address issues further and supplementary to evidence called by Environmental Justice Australia on behalf of Environment Victoria, Save Westernport and the Victorian National Parks Association:
- a. community impacts concerning land use;
  - b. safety risks and hazards; and
  - c. unacceptable flaws and inadequacies in the EES.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACTS CONCERNING THE PROJECT PROCESS**

19. With reference to the Scoping Requirements<sup>2</sup> and the Ministerial Guidelines,<sup>3</sup> Save Westernport is particularly concerned about the severe adverse impacts on our community's wellbeing if the project proceeds.
20. Save Westernport submits that these adverse impacts will not only be due to the impacts on amenity from increased noise, light and other project effects. Our community will also experience grief, rage and powerlessness that a completely unnecessary project could be permitted to do this to our precious environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Scoping requirements for the Gas Import Jetty and Crib Point to Pakenham Gas Pipeline (January 2019), 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 2006, 3, 16, 18.

21. Our community faces a 'death by a thousand cuts' argument from the proponent – as if our environment does not matter. As if we in Westernport do not matter.
22. Further, this project has already cost us. It is being assessed in a time when climate change has been recognised as contributing to a growing phenomenon of solastalgia – the dominant signs of which are a loss of ecosystem health and corresponding sense of place, threats to personal health and wellbeing, and a sense of injustice and/or powerlessness.<sup>4</sup> Many in our community are already familiar with these signs, and the possibility of this project exacerbates them.
23. Further adverse social effects have already been felt. By the time the proponents had provided their EES to the Minister, Australia was in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. We requested a pause to the exhibition of the EES so that we might at least not have to respond until the most severe restrictions had ceased. We were supported by environmental organisations, local MPs and countless individuals. We asked for a postponement four separate times, but this was denied.
24. This meant that everyone who cared about Westernport had to obtain and read the EES and make submissions in eight weeks, over half of that time under Stage 4 restrictions. Our libraries and Council offices were not open for people to inspect copies of the EES. We could not hold public meetings. Even the Save Westernport Committee could not meet face to face. Most of us could not visit all of the potentially affected sites, including at least some expert witnesses.
25. We love this area so much that we added the EES process to our burden from COVID. The imposte on our mental health nearly broke us.
26. And yet we broke the record for number of submissions to this process. That is how much we care about Westernport Bay and the impacts of the project if it is permitted to proceed.

#### **AMENITY IMPACTS**

27. With reference to the Scoping Requirements and the Ministerial Guidelines, Save Westernport is particularly concerned about:

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<sup>4</sup> Glenn Albrecht et al, 'Solastalgia: The distress caused by environmental change', *Australian Psychiatry* Vol 15 Supplement 2007 doi: 10.1080/10398560701701288.

- a. significant impacts on community residents and visitors from loss of amenity due to project construction and operation noise in the Hastings-Crib Point area;<sup>5</sup>
- b. significant impacts on community residents and visitors from loss of amenity due to impacts on visual (including lighting) and landscape values from the FSRU and LNG carriers, particularly in the most easily accessible section of Woolleys Beach reserve and picnic area.<sup>6</sup>

### **VEGETATION IMPACTS**

28. With reference to section 6(2) of the Environment Effects Act 1978 and the Scoping Requirements, Save Westernport is particularly concerned about:

- a. Impacts of vegetation clearing at the Gas Import Jetty Works site without any prior assessment of flora and fauna and any associated impacts, after the Minister's decision that an EES was required.<sup>7</sup>

### **COMMUNITY IMPACTS CONCERNING LAND USE**

29. With reference to the Scoping Requirements, Save Westernport is particularly concerned about:

- a. Loss of community informal access to the area immediately north of the Crib Point Jetty, and to the ocean surrounding and under the Crib Point Jetty.<sup>8</sup>

### **SAFETY RISKS AND HAZARDS**

30. With reference to the Scoping Requirements, Save Westernport is particularly concerned about:

- a. inappropriate application of the 'so far as is reasonably practicable' (SFAIRP) standard for risk reduction; and
- b. inappropriate deferral until after the EES of detailed analyses of risks impacts and management of safety issues.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Scoping Requirements, 17-18; Ministerial Guidelines, 16-18.

<sup>6</sup> Scoping Requirements, 17-18; Ministerial Guidelines, 16-18.

<sup>7</sup> Scoping Requirements, 13-15, 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Scoping Requirements, 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Scoping Requirements, 12-13.

## INADEQUACIES AND UNKNOWNNS IN THE EES

31. With reference to the Scoping Requirements and pertaining to the issues outlined at paragraphs 27 to 30 above, Save Westernport will address:

- a. unacceptable flaws in the general content and style of the EES;<sup>10</sup> and
- b. inadequacies in the EES, including scope,<sup>11</sup> mitigation measures, gaps and flaws in assessment, and statements of commitment.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

32. Save Westernport looks forward to the opportunity to fully explore these matters with the IAC and fellow parties over the balance of this hearing.

9 October 2020

Dr Chris Atmore  
On behalf of  
Save Westernport

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<sup>10</sup> Scoping requirements, 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Scoping requirements, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Scoping requirements, 8.