

11 April 2008

Garnaut Climate Change Review

Level 2, 1 Treasury Place

Melbourne VIC 3002

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Garnaut Climate Change Review.

We are a group of concerned residents in the South East of Melbourne which formed some 18 months ago because of our grave concerns regarding Climate Change, lack of forward planning on the environment, and the poor/lack or very limited performance of the EPA.

Our area has been proposed for a major port upgrade and associated road/rail links to the Port of Hastings. They are stating best world practice but they have not been monitoring the Ramsar site which is years overdue. The assessments of the health of our Westernport Bay are being monitored by those with vested interests and certainly in our opinion not open and unbiased. The image of the clean, green State-significant, recreational and tourism destination – the Mornington Peninsula is about to be changed forever as land use on the Mornington Peninsula (an additional 9,000 acres) becomes heavy industrial – port related use. If the POHLU&TS strategy is enacted the Mornington Peninsula will house the largest industrial area of any Victorian local government council.

Our concerns are not just for this area as this seems to be the theme nationwide. The EPA has become a toothless tiger and it's performance demonstrates that it is in function, a "pro environmentally-unfriendly approval" mechanism of the state government. Dredging of Westernport Bay would destroy the mangroves and seagrasses that have in the past years been destroyed 70 per centsee except from surfriders website

<http://www.surfrider.org.au/publications/media/branch.php>

Sea Grasses

Industrial development at the head of Westernport Bay, residential development along the coastal fringe, and contamination of creeks and waterways with agricultural fertilisers have all led to serious ecological damage within Westernport Bay. With oil tankers now moving in and out of the Bay, the risk of spills constantly threatens this vulnerable ecosystem.

One major effect of development has been the destruction of the once lush sea grass beds which are fundamental to the survival of the whole network of marine life forms in Westernport. It's been estimated that something like 70-80 percent of the original sea grass beds have been destroyed over the past couple of decades.

Surfers who love the Bay and still rejoice in occasional visits by whales dolphins, seals and fairy penguins need to fight against the devastating effects of development. Raise your consciousness. Insist on tighter controls for industry and agriculture. Oppose all further industrial, tourist and agricultural development.

The proposal is to export Brown Coal and woodchips from Gippsland and bring much of the container ships and vehicles in through Port of Hastings for Melbourne is so lacking. Most of the freight will need to be transported by truck through the southern suburbs to Melbourne. This is not Greenhouse friendly and would make Australia look very backward internationally.

We are not just concerned for Westernport Bay, Port Phillip Bay dredging is churning up the bay and causing problems for generations to come. It has affected many people now with fishing, diving, tourism etc major issues. The economic viability for the dredging is the product of the Port of Melbourne Corporation which is not in our opinion unbiased. Their justification is that we need to make the channels deeper for bigger ships. The POMC only needed to assist a very small amount of ships to enter the bay last year (something like 5%) and exports are decreasing < with empty containers included as exports)

Quite apart from this local issue we are concerned as to the decisions being made widely.

The weather here has become more extreme. Hotter and more violent winds and storms. Birds and animals that once lived in the area like migratory birds, blue wrens, swallows, yellow robins, sugar gliders, KOALAS, SWAMP WALLABIES, eastern grey kangaroos, ECHIDNA, southern brown bandicoots, ANTECHINUS AND VICTORIAS RAREST MAMMAL THE NEW HOLLAND MOUSE- ARE already REDUCING. After 130 years of European occupation it is absolutely ESSENTIAL to protect what we have left right NOW.

Something must be done to prevent this destruction. Our local councils, City of Casey and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council have biodiversity and conservation strategies however do not monitor their efficacy yearly nor do they apply fines to people who ignore removal of native vegetation laws. Protective overlays are not applied consistently and often not at all to areas of endangered, rare or threatened flora.

On a personal level we have joined environmental groups, installed water tanks, cut our own consumption of greenhouse gases, even purchasing a hybrid car and planting many native trees, buy green energy, limited showers and use greywater on our gardens, recycling and reducing our footprint on the environment.

We believe if industry and commercial interests are left to monitor and give their results (or funding to obtain) on our environment we will see a continued decline in the air, water and quality of our environment. There will always be pressure to continue to destroy our lungs, which is our environment.

Internationally Australia once lead the world on environment issues. We now feel ashamed of our lack of planning and ACTION on these issues.

We could all use less and enjoy life more. I would love to install a solar/wind system but the cost is prohibitive.

We must set strong science based targets to reduce greenhouse emissions by at least 40% NOW. Don't leave it till 2020. It is our watch and we must do what has to be done.

Watching the polar caps and glaciers melt, our Great Barrier Reef bleach and Kakadu lose its natural beauty is heartbreaking.

We have the sun, wind, tidal, geothermal ...it is affordable and nothing is more urgent. What will future generations think of our actions today?

What are we waiting for ???

Mary Madigan

**President Westernport Action Group Inc
Pearcedale 3912**