

My name is Joan Selby Smith and I visit Westernport Bay often due to the fact that my family shares a holiday house with my brother's family.

I have holidayed on Phillip Island since the 1950s, and I love its many and varied beaches, the multitude of walks now available along beaches, headlands overlooking spectacular seascapes, via boardwalks through wetlands and along bush tracks.

I thank the Crib Point Inquiry and Advisory Committee and the Minister for Planning for the opportunity to make a submission to the environment assessment of the Crib Point gas import jetty and gas pipeline project. There are a variety of issues which should deem this proposal unacceptable under its current form and that I will point to in my submission but the issue that concerns me most is the negative impact on the amenity of the areas surrounding the terminal both for humans and the wildlife which inhabits the sea and adjacent areas. Also, the impact of further investment in the fossil fuel industry at this critical stage in the fight against climate change should mean that the project should not even be considered.

The beach and reserve area around Crib Point jetty is a popular spot for residents and visitors alike. Access to the reserve and surrounding areas is likely to be affected by the loss of bush or by disruptions because of maintenance or high noise. The EES notes that there is not a comparable reserve area nearby. The increased number of ships (around 40 more visits a year) coming into Westernport Bay and the strict exclusion zones will mean anglers and sailors will have more disruptive ship traffic to contend with. Anglers will enjoy a smaller catch as a result of the impact of increased shipping and toxic chlorination of the important nursery seagrass surrounding the Crib Point jetty.

Phillip Island is the second most tourism-dependent region in all of Australia. People come to see the little penguins and the migrating Humpback and Southern Right whales as well as other incredible marine and wetland wildlife. The industrialisation of Westernport Bay in the form of huge gas tankers and a Floating Storage and Regasification Unit will undermine the beauty of the area and be inconsistent with the perception that it is a pristine and protected wetland. This could impact Phillip Island as a popular tourist destination.

Recent research has shown that wetlands have the potential to capture and store large amounts of carbon for hundreds of years. Wetlands should be protected and enhanced for their role in the fight against climate change rather than being subject to potentially damaging projects like this gas import terminal proposed by AGL. In Victoria we have already bulldozed or drained most of our freshwater wetlands which has contributed to the loss of approximately 35 per cent of wetlands worldwide between 1970 and 2015. We cannot afford to continue to lose more as we face the climate crisis.

If the project is approved AGL could dump over 400 million litres of chlorinated water into the Bay each day which could have a disastrous impact on marine wildlife. There is so much we do not know about how this cold chlorinated wastewater

(approximately 7⁰ C cooler than the bay's temperature) will affect marine life in Westernport. The impact modelling completed by AGL is not comprehensive and in some cases totally inappropriate. Furthermore, current Victorian laws prohibit the discharge of wastewater in high conservation value areas like Westernport Bay - clause 22 of the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters). AGL has so far been unsuccessful in their attempts to weaken these laws. Combining the poor impact assessments and the fact that the plan currently does not meet the legal requirements should be another trigger sufficient to put a stop to this proposal.

It is also concerning to see the lack of credible assessments on how noise would affect marine wildlife. AGL acknowledge in their EES that there have been no baseline studies of the noise in Westernport Bay. They have also not tested the impact of noise in Westernport Bay itself nor the noise produced by a berthed FSRU. Even with these inadequate studies the EES states that underwater sound would elicit behavioural changes in dolphins and hinder the communication of whales in the area. The noise would also deter fish and other marine animals from foraging nearby which would affect the important ecosystem around Crib Point.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, climate scientists and millions of Australians now know that climate change is not a threat in the distant future but a dangerous reality we face right now. We are on track for several degrees Celsius of warming by the end of the century if we do not curb our emissions from fossil fuels. The plummeting costs of renewables and energy storage has rendered fossil fuel projects not only a threat to our environment but also bad business. Corporations like AGL should be investing more in renewables and supporting consumers to move away from gas instead of investing in soon-to-be stranded assets. This proposal to build a gas import terminal is not consistent with what we need to do to create a safe climate.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to the environment assessment of the Crib Point gas import jetty and gas pipeline project. As outlined above, the negative impact on greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria would be unacceptable. There are many other viable, and more suitable, options Victoria can pursue to ensure that we meet our energy needs without exposing the precious wetlands of Westernport Bay, the unique wildlife which depend on this ecosystem, or the local community to any harm.

Sincerely,

Joan Selby Smith