

Westernport Action Group



(Inc. Victoria 2007)
A0049677M

56 Baxter-Tooradin Road PEARCEDALE VIC 3912

18 December 2006

**Port of Hastings Corporation
P.O. Box 129
Hastings 3915**

**SUBMISSION.. Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport
Strategy**

**Re: Port of Hastings Land Use & Transport Strategy
Draft Consultation
LACK OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

We who are ratepayers in the City of Casey, Frankston and other municipalities & members of WAG (Westernport Action Group) believe the Port of Hastings Corporation, City of Casey and other relevant municipalities, local MPs together with the State Government of Victoria have a MORAL & LEGAL responsibility to notify residents about the proposed Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy considering its state significance, the massive scale of the project, the resultant increase in deaths, sickness and injuries and its many impacts including those in relation to community safety.

- 1) Formal advertising in newspapers by the Port of Hastings Corporation, City municipalities and State Government to inform ordinary residents has been very minimal to non-existent. The consequences of this proposal are far reaching and will have an enormous impact on this state and resident's health and well-being. In addition to this, we ask the question "How can any municipality put in an intelligent and informed submission on behalf of their residents without due consultation with those who are affected and concerned?" We**

have attached a copy of a Media Release by the City of Casey which states the area affected is the Southern parts of Casey which is not accurate. (Annexed hereto and marked "A") There is no mention of the rail upgrade from Clyde straight through to Lyndhurst through Cranbourne for example. Anyone from all other areas in the South East Corridor will think it doesn't affect them. This is completely misleading the public. Furthermore the City of Casey notification of its Public Information Session on 30th November 2006 failed to meet the deadlines for the prior week of three main Cranbourne area local papers. (Copy of newspaper article on page 7 of the Cranbourne Independent dated 29th November 2006 annexed hereto and marked "B").

- 2) When the extent and scope of this proposal and some of its possible impacts were revealed to a small number of residents in the Pearcedale area, some with only hours prior notice of the meeting held on Monday 13th November 2006, the Pearcedale Public Hall was packed with 170 concerned residents which was unprecedented in this area, with many residents turned away due to a lack of space in the hall. We believe this to be more indicative of the public response to this proposal if the public are properly informed.
- 3) Those residents who actually tried to read the Draft Consultation document have said it is difficult to understand because of the jargon used and the diagrams are not clear. There is still confusion about where exactly the proposed infrastructure will be, why exactly we need it and why whatever the issues perceived by the government should be this addressed in this way with no alternatives offered. We believe that the reasons for the project are not explained properly and diagrams are designed to confuse people. The environmental issues which also should be addressed were not afforded clear explanation and furthermore it is not clear when an Environmental Effects Statement will be carried out and if any at all will be done particularly for Western Port Bay in time for it to have any impact at all. We feel an upfront EES is essential and for the whole project and not in stages as indicated.

- 4) Alarmed residents have stated some of the following concerns including environmental, lack of public education, economic and social impacts. This is definitely not an exhaustive list;**
- a) Western Port Bay will be negatively affected although it is a Ramsar-designated wetland of International Significance & Western Port Bay is recognised as part of a UNESCO Biosphere**
 - b) The possible destruction of the internationally recognised mangroves and seagrass as well as the fragile ecosystems within this area consisting of millions of organisms including the many thousands of wader birds which migrate there and are protected by JAMBA/CAMBA. The bird groups and other organizations with special interests in this area were not notified at all. There will also be a threat to the penguins and tourism in this area.**
 - c) It is only right and proper to notify residents of the proposal to put an overlay over their land for a proposed FREIGHT TRAIN LINE**
 - d) The Port of Hastings Corporation has also not been forthcoming with the actual route of the proposed freight train line which constantly changes with each conversation depending on the side of road you live on and in some cases the entire route thereof.**
 - e) “The consultation process has been flawed”, as quoted by Mr Neal Burgess who is now MP for Hastings states in the Cranbourne Leader newspaper dated 22nd Nov 2006. He goes on to say “there has been no real community consultation in Pearcedale, Cranbourne and Devon Meadows”. In actual fact there has been no real public consultation right through the South East Corridor or on the other side of Melbourne as those who will be affected are not restricted to those three areas mentioned.**
 - f) It is unbelievable that the Port of Hastings Corporation CEO Mr. Ralph Kenyon when questioned during the Pearcedale meeting by a resident about why they haven’t informed people living right through to the city, he answered by saying “are we meant to tell everyone on the east side of Melbourne?” The truth is that this proposal will have an impact on everyone using our roads and rail and living in areas where trucks and trains will travel. The public should be able to expect to be informed of projects of this magnitude, which will directly affect them in some way. This is a project of state significance**

and should have been accorded proper publicity available as for other similar type projects.

- g) The Port of Hastings Corporation did not make properly available for public display project overviews in all libraries and did not provide sufficient Feedback Forms. Bear in mind not all people have access or know how to use a computer. It should not be expected of the public to go photocopying Feedback Forms. Not all people who requested the accompanying Maunsell CD with the relevant reports received them and many CD's were faulty.**
- h) The Draft consultation document and accompanying FAQ's sheet clearly seeks to promote and impose the Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy rather than inform people of all the possible impacts and alternatives in a fair and egalitarian fashion.**
- i) There is an impression that the so called community reference group are not responding to public enquiries for example the Biosphere chairman Mr. Rob Gell has not responded at all to date. Another member of the community reference group has advised us that the Biosphere is not actually allowed to be involved in planning issues. When a member was asked about this proposal displayed a lack of basic knowledge as to the long term shipping planned for Westernport Bay and was alarmed at our questions and also said he had no knowledge at all about the road and rail infrastructure proposed. This is remarkable and we believe that all interested environmental groups should have a key voice in this entire process. The public are not able to freely access their contributions to the process so far. The MP's Rosy Buchanan and Greg Hunt MP did not advise any residents about this proposal at all. We ask the question "why didn't they tell residents knowing full well that many people would be directly affected?"**
- j) Businesses have not been notified of these plans, which will seriously affect their business. One example is there are a number of farmers who have stated they will lose their farms and will be put out of business. Food prices will increase as a result.**
- k) Vibrations especially from the freight trains causing damage to properties including cracking of houses.**
- l) Many residents including a JP who witnesses divorce papers forecasts a rise in the divorce rates as unbearable pressures are placed on families. There will be higher rates of suicide and depression, deaths and injuries from increased numbers of**

road and rail fatalities and increased rates of sickness in the community particularly considering the carcinogenic diesel fumes from both trucks and trains. The unbearable increase in the level of noise is also of great concern and dog barking will become a big problem. The list goes on and on.

- 5) This proposal has state significance and should be advertised accordingly with ample opportunity for the public to have access to all relevant information so that useful feedback is generated. Feedback forms were not available at all libraries (as far as we know they were only ever in two - Hampton Park and Cranbourne where the public display and documents were thrown in a cupboard) and for some interested residents the libraries are more than 10kms away from their homes and places of business further adding to frustration and due process. The submissions were originally due to be submitted by the 3rd November 2006 however because the Port of Hastings has not duly advised citizens and some are only finding out about all this now primarily by word of mouth, the date for submissions has been extended to 30th November 2006 (possibly now the 22th December 2006?) which is clearly still not enough time for people to be properly informed. Frankston council just recently decided to hold over their submission and acknowledged that there has been no public consultation and will now be holding a public information session as they realise the huge impact the project will have on them. This is an unacceptable process with consultation and submissions expected from residents an improper expectation whilst other groups have had months to years to prepare their input. Until the public are properly informed there cannot be a fair due date for submissions.

- 6) We find it alarming that land has already been purchased in Lyndhurst for the inland port and attempts have been made to purchase another 100 acres along Western Port Highway which are connected and dependent on the port expansion, even though the proposal is only meant to be in Draft Consultation stage. Furthermore we have been told by an EPA staff member and a City of Frankston staff member, that we have “Buckley’s” and “a one in a thousand chance of stopping this.” It seems that the port expansion is a foregone conclusion as far as the government is concerned, no matter what the public says.

- 7) We therefore find the consultation and submission process flawed and unacceptable and respectfully demand that the Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy consultation and submission process be given proper and widespread publicity and enough Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy documents, Feedback forms and operational information CD's produced for the public. The date for submissions should be extended to at least March 2007 to give sufficient time to the Port of Hastings Corporation to adequately advertise in local and Melbourne media and press allowing and indeed encouraging an OPEN PUBLIC DEBATE in an orderly and respectful fashion. We believe that in a democratic society the people should expect they are reasonably informed and have a right to have input.**

**Thank you,
Yours sincerely,
President Mary Madigan
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