

Western Port

Past, Present and Future

A presentation by Jeff Nottle

for the 55th anniversary of

Phillip Island Conservation Society, 6 January 2024.





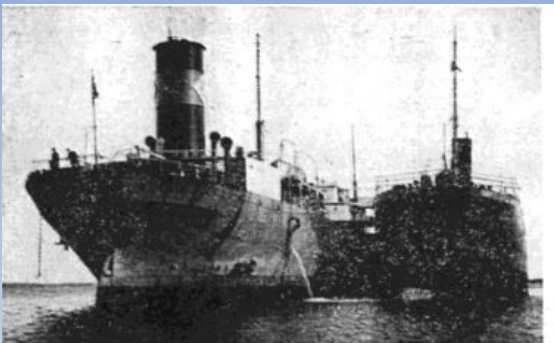
Western Port

The Past

Western Port's location leads to ongoing pressures between developers and conservationists

A long history of industrial scale proposals including:

- 1960s: Victorian Premier Henry Bolte states that Western Port will become an industrial heartland
- BP Australia establishes oil refineries at Crib Point.
- Nuclear power station on French Island proposed – plan abandoned.
- 1970's Esso opens gas plant at Long Island Point.
- Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council forms in response to proposed refinery



• Ninna Borthen transferring a petrol cargo to Vincas at Stoney Point in May, 1933.



Thursday, October 27, 1966

62,000 TONNER IN WESTERNPORT

BELOW: The 62,000-ton tanker, "British Centaur," loaded with crude oil, passes Cowes on its way to B.P. Refinery at Crib Point last week.

It remained at Crib Point jetty until after the official opening of the refinery by the Premier, Sir Henry Bolte.

After the opening, official guests were entertained aboard the "British Centaur" by Captain H. J. Sadler.

Guests included the chairman of B.P. in London, Sir Maurice and Lady Bridgeman, and board members of B.P. companies in Australia.



Port of Hastings being developed, circa 1960s.

BIG MONEY READY FOR RHYLL AREA



Private enterprise will pour money into the development of the Rhyll area on Phillip Island if an application is approved by the Town and Country Planning Board.

The plan provides for a safe boat harbour and mooring, dredging and developing of apparent waste land around the tidal inlet for boating facilities.

A Parliamentary Development Inquiry three years ago declared that development on The Island should be done by private enterprise.

At the moment the Rhyll area is the only natural safe boat anchorage area on Phillip Island.

People in the Rhyll area, where there is only a short expanse of beach, would be within three-quarters of a mile of good sandy beaches extending round to Cowes, with the bridging of the inlet across the

boat marinas.

Cowes building contractor, Mr Jim Mitchell, who purchased 50 acres of land adjoining the inlet, is the driving force behind the big project and has obtained the financial backing. He has privately revealed the amount of that solid backing.

Natural anchorage

Mr Mitchell said the tidal inlet is a natural boat anchorage, and with dredging and excavation will be one of the best in the State.

It is ideally situated for the fishing grounds in Westernport Bay.

He added: "It will be a natural attraction to boat owners, who could erect boat houses, and there is no doubt it would be used extensively by interstate craft up to 40-feet.

"I would have preferred to see it sponsored by government money, but as this is not available, I decided to do something about it in order that a natural Island asset can be developed."

The plan has received general approval from the Phillip Island Shire Council.

Extensive architect plans have been prepared for the scheme.

The application for development will be presented to the Shire Council in six weeks. Council will forward it to the Town and Country Planning Board, a government body which controls all Phillip Island's future development plans.

Mr Mitchell envisages Rhyll to become a thickly populated area when the project is completed.

ABOVE: On the left is the Rhyll tidal inlet which private enterprise plans to develop. On the right is Observation Point, the start of the pool sandy beach leading to Cowes.

- Phillip Island Conservation Society forms in response to proposal for marina at Rhyll Inlet

Recent Past

- Canal development at Ventnor proposed –
 - ✓ PICS campaign against and stopped it
- Ferry terminal proposed for Cowes foreshore
 - ✓ Defeated
- State government announces Port of Hastings will be Australia's biggest container port
 - ✓ Infrastructure Vic declare Western Port is unsuitable

PICS member Lisa Schonberg's exceptional marine mammal photographs were pivotal to the campaign.



Western Port and 21st century Energy

AGL proposes **gas import and processing terminal** at Crib Point.

A “gas factory” was proposed to operate on the water for 20 years

- Proposed to use and discharge up to 450,000 l/d of chlorinated water
- PICS partners with key community groups around the bay
- PICS partners with Sea Shepherd to protect whales
- Six week planning hearing held for the State planning Minister
- PICS appears at hearings and attends the AGL AGM to challenge the proposal
- A State record set with 10,000 objections lodged to the inquiry
- ✓ State Planning Minister rejects proposal on the basis of impact on marine life



Generated image of the proposed Crib Point Floating Storage Regassification Unit facility in action. From AGL public information

Coal to Hydrogen pilot project

- **Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain Pilot** commenced;
“This purpose of the pilot project is to demonstrate an integrated hydrogen supply chain encompassing production, storage and transportation in delivering liquefied hydrogen to Japan. The pilot project integrates coal gasification and gas-refining, hydrogen gas transportation and liquefaction, liquefied hydrogen storage and loading, shipbuilding and operation of a specialised liquefied hydrogen carrier.” CSIRO HyResource website, June 2022

A fundamentally flawed project incorporating unproven Carbon Capture and Storage



This....

Or this?



sign the petition
to oppose Japan's
coal to hydrogen
project
bit.ly/No2HESC

savewesternport.org

- Vic govt announced Port of Hastings as “**preferred port**” for **construction of Victoria’s Offshore Windfarms**
 - EES for Western Port’s part in Windfarm construction

Ports as key players in the offshore wind supply chain

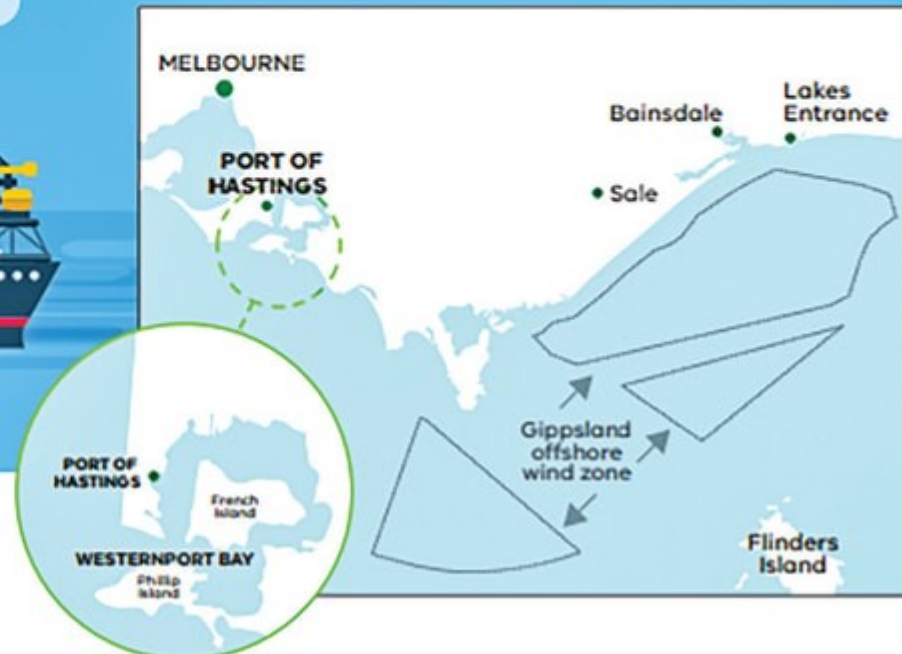
The Port of Hastings is proposed to be the staging and storage area for offshore wind components and equipment



Offshore wind components and equipment are then transported to offshore wind farms for installation



The Port of Hastings could also support the ongoing operation and maintenance of offshore wind farms in Australia's first offshore wind zone, located off the Gippsland coast



So what has changed?

❖ In the last decade Government and industry spent over \$200M on industrial scale proposals in Western Port that failed to obtain independent approvals.

- ✓ Community and community groups around Western Port have formed alliances and now work together
- ✓ 10,000 objections were lodged against the AGL proposal
- ✓ Councils, business and tourism authorities now provide input into Western Port development proposals
- ✓ A Western Port “movement” has been created

A recognition award at the 50th Anniversary of Environment Victoria

“Westernport community for resilience in the face of repeated attempts to destroy the local environment at Westernport.”



✓ PICS receives Environment Victoria 50th anniversary award for protecting Western Port

And what else has changed?

THEN:

- X Environment Effects Statement (EES) were *not part of* initial decisions to develop
- X EES studies were *shunned by industry* and argued against
- X EES scope of enquiry was *not transparent* and limited

NOW:

- ✓ EES studies are now part of decision making process
- ✓ Draft scope of EES process open for public comment prior to final scoping
- ✓ Ecological surveys are prepared prior to decisions to proceed
- ✓ Environment impacts are now being considered before decisions to proceed

An exciting change

In 2022 PICS formed an alliance with Environment Victoria (EV), Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), Save Western Port and Westernport Biosphere;

In 2023 the alliance released a “framework” for protections for Western Port.

The framework has a dedicated governance model:

<https://www.actforwesternportbay.au/>

A Strategic Framework

For the future of Western Port Bay



PROTECTING VICTORIA'S
WETLAND BIODIVERSITY AND
SUSTAINABLE MARINE AND
TOURISM INDUSTRIES

Western Port framework:

- Endorsed by all 4 Councils around Western Port
- Supported by State MPs whose electorate includes Western Port
- Supported by key stakeholders including business and community groups

Funding pending approval by Government in 2024 budget.

“Our vision: to effectively manage, restore, and legally protect the marine and coastal environment of Western Port Bay and establish an ecologically sustainable economy for the future.”



**Act for Western
Port Bay**

The future

Development applications will continue;

Applicants have knowledge of previously failed applications;

Environmental impacts will be considered early;

**A governance framework will provide certainty for
industry, Governments and community**

The Western Port movement is here to stay



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