

Submission Text: Inquiry into Decommissioning Oil and Gas Infrastructure-

As a resident living in the Gippsland Lakes area I am deeply concerned that, if not done properly and completely, the existing rigs requiring decommissioning will have the potential to pollute the area surrounding and including the Lakes. It is a delicate area which includes Ramsar listed sites and relies on fishing and tourism.

I have attended an information session conducted by ExxonMobil and was certainly not convinced that they are trying to do anything other than the bare minimum in order to reduce their costs of decommissioning. While I understand that it is an expensive exercise they have made billions of dollars in profit and paid very little in tax resulting in little benefit to the Australian people. If not done properly it is the Australian people who will once again pay the price and foot the bill.

If allowed to get away with a partial decommissioning, leaving most of the infrastructure in place, a precedent will be established that allows other mining and fossil fuel companies to believe they do not have to clean up. Surely this then also allows them to breach the conditions of their original license, and gives the public little confidence that conditions on licenses have any meaning as they are not adhered to or enforced.

My understanding is that the rigs have received little in the way of maintenance and are now quite eroded and dangerous. There have been three spills of hydrocarbons in the last 18 months and the community is at risk of the contaminants at all stages of the decommissioning. Strict guidelines need to be established and adhered to before dead fish start washing up on the shores of Gippsland. I further understand that Australia is short on steel available for recycling, so this is a potential source that can and should be utilised.

It would be useful if at all stages the community can be kept fully informed by the relevant responsible authorities of what is happening. Unfortunately this has the potential to be an “out of sight out of mind” situation until something goes terribly wrong and the consequences become obvious.

Thank you for allowing me to participate, and taking the time to read my submission.