

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition Number: 659, 617
Petition Sponsored by: Sarah Mansfield
Directed to: Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP
Tabled on: 14/05/2025

Petition Grievance:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the strong community objection towards Esso Australia's plans to decommission the retired oil and gas rigs at Barry Beach Marine Terminal (BBMT) in Corner Inlet. South Gippsland residents are concerned about the risk posed to their communities and natural environment from the proposed decommissioning activities. Esso Australia plans to transport up to thirteen rig topsides and ten steel pile jackets through the Corner Inlet shipping channel to BBMT to be broken down amidst Ramsar listed wetlands. Community concerns include toxicity (the rig topsides contain complex wastes and improper handling of these materials would pose risks to the inlet, its fisheries and the surrounding communities), erosion (regular movement of large vessels through the Corner Inlet shipping channel could damage geological features), highways (heavy vehicles transporting significant volumes of steel for recycling could further damage the region's narrow roads) and dangerous precedent (allowing this campaign exposes Corner Inlet to the risk of hosting all future decommissioning projects for Bass Strait fossil fuel infrastructure).

Petition Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government and the Minister for Planning to commission an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) into Esso Australia's plans for the decommissioning of retired oil and gas rigs at Barry Beach Marine Terminal and ensure that the EES involves a period of public consultation, recognising that any decommissioning activity undertaken in Victoria must reflect international best practice.

Reply:

Projects that could have a significant effect on the environment are referred to me under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* for a decision on whether an environment effects statement (EES) should be prepared. I am advised by the Department of Transport and Planning that Esso Australia has been engaging with the department. The department has requested further information from Esso Australia about the project and its impacts. On receipt, the department will continue to engage with Esso about the necessary assessment and approvals process for their project.

The *Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978*, which I issued in 2023, set out criteria for referring a project, the information to be submitted as part of the referral and the matters to be considered in determining whether an EES is required. Should Esso Australia need to refer its project to me for a decision on the need for an EES, the referral documents and my reasons for decision (once made) will be published on the planning website at www.planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments/browse-projects.



Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP
Minister for Planning
17-6-2025