

## **Inquiry into Auditor General Report No.202: Meeting Obligations to Protect Ramsar Wetlands (2016)**

Mr Kevin Chambers

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Organisation Name:**

**Your position or role:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### **YOUR SUBMISSION**

**Submission:**

Dear Sirs

I wish to respond to your request for submissions on your Ramsar Enquiry and do so via these comments and via a letter I wrote to the local Bass Coast press just before the last State Election.

In short I submit that State Governments of both colours adhere to the Ramsar protection principles only when it suits them.

Especially as it relates to the top 2/3rds of Western Port Bay that are Ramsar protected.

If this had been adhered to since Western Port was Ramsar Protected, those of us who have fought almost a continual battle to protect Western Port Bay for what it still is today, could have been doing something much more productive with our time..

The above previous and ongoing threats to the Ramsar areas of Western Port are detailed in the letter attached

Sincerely

Kevin Chambers

[REDACTED]  
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## WESTERN PORT-THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Although I don't live in Bass Coast anymore, obviously after either holidaying or living down there for over 60 years, it will always be a very special place in my life.

It therefore baffles and infuriates me in equal measures, that the people who live near and love Western Port and its environs have to almost continually fight to preserve what it is today and has been for eons, ie. a beautiful, natural peaceful environment that many generations have enjoyed, but is almost continually under threat from all manner of projects and proposals that would destroy it.

If it's not the MacLellan's at San Remo twice in the last century wanting to clog up Griffith Point with houses it's the Cadogan's at Ventnor and the "Macca's" are at it again in San Remo.

If it's not 60's Bolte and "The Ruhr of the South" complete with nuclear power stations and causeways, its Esso BHP in the '70s and The Libs Hastings container port disaster of 2014.

Once we had that one bedded down along comes AGL and Kawasaki with the latter being "Hastings Mark 2" with all the dredging required etc.

In the meantime, governments of both colours commission a plethora of comprehensive studies, (see footnote), that clearly state, "Don't touch Western Port", but when it suits them, they blissfully ignore their own expensive advice. Expensive not only in taxpayer \$\$, but also the time spent via them inviting "community consultation". Which, then leads to groups like Preserve Westernport having to find precious resources to fight back. As a proud founding member, I'm sure I speak for the group in stating that we all have other things we'd much rather be doing with our lives, in my case that's fishing our wonderful Bay.

Examples of the results of these are as follows

a/. Recreational fishing. Generates \$600 mil Pa in economic input for the whole Bay and employs thousands of people in areas such as tackle shops, take away food, accommodation, fuel etc etc. (Ernst and Young 2013 for the then Lib Government)

A 2011 Liberal "nasty" here, was to declare all but 25% of the safe high tide fishable water as a port limit, in anticipation of building the container port. No fisho was ever told, nor was anyone ever fined for fishing within those boundaries. It would have wrecked the whole Bay for fishing, not to mention what the dredging would have done to increase the already alarming existing rate of coastal erosion.

Wot's the point in the current Govt's "Target One Million" rec fishing policy if another policy exists to destroy the second biggest saltwater fishing grounds in the State? Plus the 40? million they stumped up to upgrade the penguin facilities.

b/. Tourism. Bass Coast is the second most tourism dependent economy in Australia and ranks number one in Victoria in that category. 1 in 3 jobs in Bass Coast relies on tourism. Tourism Bay wide, generates \$1 billion PA. Again these figures came from the "previous Libs" via various documents and studies.

3/. Vegetable growing. The underground aquifers that run under where Hastings mark 2.(aka Kawasaki Hydrogen), is proposed, feed the Bunyip Food Bowl. One of the country's most productive food producing areas and the dredging required for the container port would have meant saltwater penetration of those aquifers. Salty asparagus anyone??

Had the Libs not lost the 2014 election this monstrosity would now be in full swing and would have destroyed the above total \$2.1 billion economic input PA and the thousands of jobs that go with it in the process.

What was worse, was the blatant repeated Lib misrepresentation that Western Port is a "natural deep water port". Yes there is deep water from the Nobbies up to Cowes, but after that, at low tide we then can see the 270sq km of mudflats and the channel up from Cowes to Hastings was dredged back in the 70's. If it's "dredged" it can't be "natural"! Western Port discoverer George Bass's diaries state inter alia, "it was full of mud". So if it was thus over 200 years ago, wot's changed since then???

Thence to a major Labour sin. After accepting the Infrastructure Victoria recommendation to put Victoria's second container port at Werribee, based on the environmental and economic grounds listed above, they now propose "container port mark 2", aka Kawasaki. To simplify the "Werribee vs Hastings" location debate, if you read the Infrastructure Victoria report and relate that back to a footy match, "Werribee won by 15 goals"

Thus, if we "stir and blend" the above issues, we come up with the fact that, despite the millions spent on Western Port recreational and environmental issues detailed above, given their ongoing industrialization plans, neither party gives a three week old packet of unrefrigerated squid for Western Port and the existing natural environmental based industries and recreational amenities.

So my challenge to both the Liberal and Labour candidates for Bass is thus. When are both your parties going to come out and admit that due to national energy policy failures, in this case natural gas, Western Port is to be the "sacrificial snapper" for the rest of the state's requirements for a gas powered hot shower and meal?.

There's several "gas tankers" worth of votes to be lost in suburbia if there's not enough supply to keep the "punters" elsewhere in the State happy. In my experience since coming back to suburbia, aside from the penguins and seals, most folks know next to nothing about Western Port and by dint of this, do not care.

Over to Ms Crugnale and Mr Paynter

Kevin Chambers



FOOTNOTE: Western Port studies: Central Region Coastal Plan, Western Port Local Coastal Hazard Assessment, Revised Western Port Ramsar Site Management Plan and of course, the Infrastructure Vic Container Port decision.