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Montara Inquiry
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22nd December 2009

**RE: Submission to The Commission of Inquiry – Montara Well Head
Platform Uncontrolled Hydrocarbon Release**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission.

I strongly believe there should be no further expansion of the petroleum industry on the North-West shelf of Australia's Kimberley region for the following reasons.

1. The lack of protection of our pristine Kimberley marine waters and the national and global significance of marine wilderness.

The seas off the Kimberley coast are internationally recognised as one of the last great unspoiled marine environments in the world. These shallow water tropical ecosystems are home to globally significant populations of internationally threatened species (e.g. whales and turtles). Yet, less than 1% of our Kimberley marine waters are protected in marine sanctuaries. The oil spill was estimated to have affected 50 000 square km of seas off the Kimberley, and oil slicks came within 69km* off Australia's coast.

** Source: Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) website*

2. The impact of developing a huge new petroleum industry on Australia's moral and global responsibility in reducing carbon emissions for the prevention of further climate change.

To give the planet its best chance of long term survival the current scientific thinking supports keeping global temperature increases to less than 2°C, above which the impacts will be extremely damaging. Development of the Browse Basin gas resource off the Kimberley coast alone will create a minimum of 10 million metric tonnes of carbon emissions each year for Australia, and prevent this country from reaching its targets and meeting its global climate change responsibilities.

3. The failure of the petroleum industry to adequately prevent and then address Australia's worst rig oil spill in a timely fashion.

Up to **23 million litres** of oil and condensate was spilled into the Timor Sea off the Kimberley from August 21 to November 3. The company, PTTEP said they didn't know exactly how much petroleum polluted our Kimberley seas but their estimates of flow rates were much lower than those suggested in Senate debates.

PTTEP took **74 days** to plug the flow temporarily, and spent three weeks towing a repair rig to the site whilst declining the offer of another rig nearby. The company made several failed attempts to plug the leak and aborted other attempts over several months. Yet their practices were considered to be "world's best practice" by the petroleum industry. Clearly **accidents will happen** and when they do the **petroleum industry cannot stop the pollution quickly**.

Once petroleum is released into the sea it cannot be easily contained or removed. Thus, any "cleanup" is only partial, leaving behind petroleum polluting the marine ecosystem. And the more petroleum left, the longer the time taken to break down as petroleum is naturally digested by specialised bacteria. Also, there is no clear science on the best methods to "cleanup" oil spills. Dispersants, a mix of toxic chemicals that kill coral spawn, were used in the "cleanup" of this oil spill and this procedure has been criticised by leading scientists.

The way forward for the planet, if it is to survive at all, has to involve sustainable, and more environmentally responsible methods of managing our natural resources. This includes our marine environments, and all the life forms they sustain. To endorse the expansion of the petroleum industry is not the clean and clever way forward, especially in light of this major oil spill disaster.

In the wake of the recent WA oil spill we urge the following recommendations be considered:

1. A network of marine parks with large sanctuaries is established in the Kimberley region to serve as protection from events like the West Atlas oil spill (Term of Reference 10);
2. It can be shown that proposals for expansion of the North-West petroleum industry are fully compliant with binding national climate change policies and targets (Term of Reference 11);
3. Faster response time mechanisms and improved oil spill procedures are developed and adopted – with strong independent compliance enforcement. (Term of Reference 8)

The time has come to properly acknowledge, understand and respect Australia's regions of natural beauty, and value their often fragile and vulnerable character. It is time to nurture the planet, not plunder and pollute her finite resources, as has all too frequently occurred in the past. The Kimberley region is a magnificent area, and a drawcard for tourism. Tourism, and a greater appreciation for the flora and fauna of the region, should be the focus for the region's economic and employment future, not further industrialisation.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Layton-Bennett