

Dr. David Borthwick
Montara Inquiry
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14th December 2009

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

I strongly believe there should be no further expansion of the petroleum industry on the North-West shelf of Australia's Kimberley region until such time as:

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)

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 3 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.

Yours Sincerely,