

Dr. David Borthwick  
Montara Inquiry  
P.O. Box 1564  
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16th 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). 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. 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). 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 Australia from reaching its targets and meeting its global climate change responsibilities.
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 did not 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.

With due consideration to all of these factors, I strongly believe there should be no further expansion of the petroleum industry on the North-West shelf of Australia’s Kimberley region.

Yours Sincerely,

Claudette Wadsworth.