



MEDIA STATEMENT

09 March 2007

WPSP Responds to Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy

The Chairman of the Western Port Seagrass Partnership (WPSP), Roger James, advised today that the Board of the WPSP had submitted a response to the Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy, based on analysis of matters pertinent to the partnership's key purposes and objectives. The following is a statement about the submission on behalf of the Board:

The WPSP is a voluntary environmental group that seeks the best outcomes for Western Port and advocates good science and lateral thinking as the basis for future decision making that could or will affect Western Port.

We believe it is proper for Government to forecast their future strategic intentions and to test the assumptions and feelings of affected communities. We support long term holistic planning and welcome the opportunity to comment and participate. It is not in the interests of the region to allow ongoing development approvals with little consideration of the net impact. The best outcomes arise from coordinated and integrated approaches.

Regarding the proposals, there are a number of deficiencies and issues of deep concern to us which we have elaborated on in our submission and for which we are seeking clarification. However we are not rejecting the concepts out of hand and we believe there are some potentially exciting opportunities for industry and Government to work with the community of Western Port to create win-win-win outcomes.

Whilst we urge a precautionary approach on several aspects of the proposal, we think it would be wrong to close our minds to how we should approach the future of this region and we seek open and transparent dialogue with the whole community to explore what could well be very positive outcomes.

In particular, we have identified a number of innovative environmental protection and impact off-set mechanisms that could be based on the scientific knowledge and techniques developed by the WPSP as part of its efforts to protect and regenerate Western Port's seagrasses, mangroves and saltmarshes.

We choose not to elaborate on our proposals at this stage until the Port of Hastings Corporation has had a chance to consider what we are proposing and to respond in a measured way. We have opened the way for further dialogue on these matters and look forward to making a positive contribution.

If the strategy is adopted by Government, the WPSP would seek to be closely involved in all efforts to protect and rehabilitate the Western Port ecosystem. If done well, we could see a net benefit for the health of the bay as well as the economic and social benefits that are usually associated with such development.

We wish to remain true to our cause as advocates and custodians for Western Port and will only entrust our support to propositions that result in net benefit for Western Port and its community.

On behalf of the Board of the Western Port Seagrass Partnership.

Roger James
Chairman