

**Inquiry into integration of regional rail and road networks and their interface with ports**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Blue Wedges Coalition is a community group whose major focus is concern and opposition to the proposed deepening of the shipping channels in Port Phillip Bay, and the Yarra River, so that larger deeper draft vessels can enter the river port of Melbourne. We have only just become aware of your committee activities after hearing it being discussed on morning radio today.

We have followed the development of the channel deepening proposal with increasing concern, as it appears that the economic justifications for the proposal have been only thinly justified, and have been at the expense of the environment. Furthermore, alternative transport options, including increased use of rail, and strengthening of links between existing deep water ports throughout Australia with our now Australia wide standard gauge rail has not been sufficiently examined. The attached paper from the Bureau of Transport Economics discusses the potential cost benefits to be realised from better use of our rail links, and development of new links. More recently, the Commonwealth is to be commended for supporting the development of the Brisbane Melbourne inland rail link for goods distribution. This link could greatly decrease the pressure to over develop the shallow river port of Melbourne, which it is admitted by the PoMC is already approaching its capacity, environmentally and "geographically"

A recent Independent Panel Hearing Report (attached) found that the project as designed was fundamentally flawed. 135 recommendations were made in relation to project design, economic analysis, risk analysis, handling of toxic sediments etc. All of these issues if properly addressed would add to the costs of the project, and hence would reduce the purported economic benefits.

Several experts have recently examined aspects of the project and found both the economics and environmental aspects of the project wanting. At the very least, further independent economic analysis, and examination of alternatives must be undertaken before the project proceeds. Ideally, an alternative solution to ongoing deepening of the shipping channels, and the attendant destruction of our environment, for the purported benefits of the economy must be found. We urge you to consider the work of Costanza et al 1997 (attached) for an alternative view of the economic resource which is our environment - especially our coastal areas- so often destroyed for port infrastructure.

We note that your committee has had very little input for environmental/community groups - with mainly business and infrastructure organisations being represented as submitters. We are puzzled by this, and have attached a selection of papers collected by our Coalition. These papers pose an alternative view, and/or point out some of the issues which the government and the Port of Melbourne appear to have failed to consider in the rush to deepen the shipping channels.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Warfe  
President  
Bleu Wedges  
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25th July 2005

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE**

**ATTACHMENT TO SUBMISSION NO. 108**

**ATTACHMENTS, APPENDICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED WITH  
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