

## Save Williamstown

### Hobsons Bay City Council Meeting 16 November 2010

#### Public Question Time

Save Williamstown, WNSRA and the residents of Cecil Street, Williamstown request that Council, as a matter of urgency, commence a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure all responsibilities of Council and other parties, to the community regarding Major Hazard Facilities (MHF) as specified in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations are complied with.

The matter of extreme concern is fuel importation and storage at the Mobil Point Gellibrand MHF which involves foreign registered vessels (often registered under flags of convenience). With the deepening of the channel these ships will be carrying up to 950,000 barrels of crude oil and transferring feedstock to refinery pipelines and storage facilities at the Point Gellibrand Pier. Australian and international government inspection regimes confirm that despite best efforts of ship owners and operators in most cases, there still occurs frequent cases of ship system or crew operating and knowledge deficiencies that lead to significant numbers of serious incidents involving tankers internationally each year, these factors can also cause minor incidents to escalate and the resulting risks must not be ignored or denied.

Understanding of "Credible Risk" has been changed worldwide after the Buncefield UK Explosion in December 2005 and the findings of the Buncefield Major Incident Investigation (Chaired by Lord Newton of Braintree), which included a review of why "planning" does not address the total population risk from a major hazard site.

Buncefield is now being referenced in safety buffers by responsible authorities in Australia and the rest of the world. Fuel importation risk cannot be mitigated with training, it is not just a risk due to operator error or poor industrial practice but is influenced by adverse weather conditions. Examples of incidents caused by weather or atmospheric conditions include the MT Leyte Spirit incident at Point Gellibrand in August 2009 when the fuel arm of the tanker ship was broken in a sudden squall and there was a crude oil spill, and of course Coode Island (lightning).

In fact, according to the attached study of storage tank incidents from around the world in the 40 years to 2005, of 242 accidents of storage tank accidents, 47.9% of all incidents were at petroleum refineries and the second most frequent place was terminals and pumping stations.

More accidents occurred with Crude Oil storage tanks and contents (32) with fire and explosion accounting for 85% of all incidents. Lightning was the most frequent cause of accident (80 of 242 incidents) followed by maintenance error. Static electricity accounted for 5% of incidents and ruptures of tanks for about 7% of incidents.

This of course excludes the high risk and dangerous fuel importation and discharge incidents which have resulted in major explosions and fires and impacted on buildings within a radius of up to 3 km - including Dalian China July 2010; Providence, Rhode Island New York 2006; and going back further

Istanbul Turkey and Bantry Bay Ireland with incredible destructive port incidents and loss of human life.

In Australia, it would appear Western Australia and NSW are leading the country by recognising the serious risk imposed by hydrocarbon importation, pipelines and tanks. WA has an imposed specified Fuel Importation buffer of 1000m. Kurnell in NSW has a moratorium on new development within 500m of the tank farm and refinery on the Kurnell Peninsula.

The people of Williamstown who live within 1000m of the fuel importation pier of the MHF at Point Gellibrand need government to provide a proper risk assessment to ensure any proposed development does not unreasonably increase risks to existing or potential residents or local business. This should include (amongst other critical issues) a review of and publication of access routes for emergency response; emergency communication methods and evacuation procedures for existing residents and workers and a review of any capacity limitations of emergency response in the peninsula. This should ensure adoption of demonstrated reasonable best practice risk control and emergency management in the event of a low probability but high consequence event and minimise and hopefully prevent loss of life.

The community requests two matters of Council:

(1) A meeting be arranged with all the relevant parties, to include:

- a. Council, State and Federal Government representatives;
- b. Emergency and Health Authorities such as: VicPolice (Williamstown Police and Water Police headquarters are about 600m from the pier); EPA; WorkSafe; Emergency Services Commissioner; Energy Safe Victoria, Department of Transport; Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Marine Safety Victoria; MFB; SES; Port of Melbourne; Department of Primary Industries (Energy and Earth Resources), Emergency Response Team;
- c. Industries/Businesses: Mobil; BAE Systems; Titanic and all businesses along Nelson Place and Point Gellibrand.
- d. Community Representatives: Save Williamstown Community Group, WNSRA, Cecil St Residents Group and others

(2) A proper risk assessment to ensure any development is appropriate from an OH&S perspective and that a comprehensive community action plan be established in preparation for any major incident occurring at the heritage peninsula of Williamstown.

This is an extremely important matter which we believe Council should take a lead role and attend to immediately to enable preliminary findings to be made

available for the Public Hearing of the Port Phillip Woollen Mill Advisory Committee prior to the deadline for expert witness statements to be submitted on 31 January 2010. In fact, Council should present a report of findings to PPWMAC.

We believe these safety issues are needed to PROPERLY inform the Advisory Committee and the wider community. The AC had requested that Save Williamstown provide responses to our letters to the relevant authorities about safety in our presentation. It is inappropriate for Williamstown residents to have to undertake this type of role. Save Williamstown does not have the manpower, financial resources nor the authority to require answers from many of the authorities or other parties. We therefore believe that it is extremely important that our local council, which has that authority, takes the steps outlined above.

We should point out that we are not on a witch-hunt and are not in any way targeting or criticising ExxonMobil. It is after all the responsibility of the relevant authorities to ensure planning around such a MHF takes into consideration all parties and of course the safety of the community.

*“From this time onward the relevant parties, including the State Government and the Advisory Committee are on notice of the real and foreseeable risk of harm and death in allowing or facilitating residential development near to a major hazard.”*

This is certainly a powerful statement. This statement was read out by a lawyer (local resident) who was assisting with our presentation at the public hearing of the PEAC in September. It is not a threat but it is certainly a warning.