

<p>STATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p> <p>28 JAN 2004</p> <p>RECEIVED</p>

Submission to the

Standing Committee on State Development

INQUIRY INTO PORT INFRASTRUCTURE

IN NSW

by the

Concerned Citizens Association

Rockdale Third Ward

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Contents

<u>About the Concerned Citizens Association of Rockdale Third Ward</u>	2
<u>Introduction to this submission</u>	2
<u>Botany Bay under pressure</u>	3
<u>We won't have anything left!</u>	4
<u>Don't spill the poison</u>	4
<u>More noise, more pollution, more congestion</u>	5
<u>Consider what is best for NSW, not just Sydney Ports</u>	6
<u>Is bigger really better?</u>	6
<u>Cultural and historical significance</u>	7
<u>In your hands</u>	7

About the Concerned Citizens Association of Rockdale Third Ward

The Concerned Citizens Association of Rockdale Third Ward (CCAR3W) is a grassroots, non-political, community group established in 1986 in response to over-development concerns in the Third Ward of Rockdale City Council. Third Ward covers the suburbs of Kyeemagh, Brighton-le-Sands and parts of Monterey, Rockdale, Banksia and Kogarah.

There are over 300 supporters of CCAR3W. The membership (approximately 60 in number) annually elects a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and six committee members. The current President of CCAR3W is Mr Alan Russell, telephone 9599 0814.

Introduction to this submission

This submission has been prepared to reflect the concern in our local community about the proposed expansion of Port Botany. The major issues are:

- The existing development pressures on Botany Bay;
- The environmental costs of reclaiming a further 60 hectares of Botany Bay;
- The need for precautionary principles in relation to the toxic plume heading towards Botany Bay;
- The social and environmental costs of increased road freight transport through the Rockdale local government area;
- The need for a whole-of-government approach that considers state-wide, even national, freight transport planning; and
- Doubt about the need to expand the Port.

Botany Bay under pressure

Botany Bay has been under intense development pressure for over one hundred years. It is surrounded by three major industries: the oil refinery at Kurnell, the container terminal at Port Botany and Sydney Airport. There are also hundreds of smaller industries that have an impact on the health and amenity of the Bay. Some have left a disastrous legacy. For example, Orica (formerly the ICI site at Botany) is planning clean-up operations for an environmental disaster of historic proportions.

In September 2002, the NSW Planning Minister promised that "environmental and social values important to this area" must not be harmed. Yet community groups from Botany, Brighton-le-Sands, south to Sutherland, Cronulla and Kurnell are fighting proposed major developments like the Port Botany expansion, Cooks Cove high-tech industrial park, Australand's 500 unit proposal at North Cronulla, a resort at Kurnell, Rocla's sand mining proposal and the Serenity Cove film studio.

The relentless development pressure both along the shores of Botany Bay and within its catchment has wreaked havoc on the environment, particularly on:

- Tidal flows in the Bay, Georges River and Cooks River – including a threat to the internationally-listed Towra Point Nature Reserve and Aquatic Reserve;
- Lady Robinsons Beach, stretching from Kyeemagh to Dolls Point;
- The Kurnell peninsula and nearby sand dunes;
- Wetland ecosystems;
- Seagrass beds; and
- Water quality.

If Botany Bay and its system of rivers are to be restored to environmental health, then any future developments within the catchment must be ecologically sustainable.

We won't have anything left!

Not only has Botany Bay seen unrestrained and uncoordinated development along its shores, it has also paid the ultimate environmental cost of its water being turned into land.

In 1972, Sydney Airport's runway 16/34 was extended to 3,962 metres by reclamation of Botany Bay. The parallel runway 16L/34R was opened in 1994 after a further reclamation. The impacts of both reclamations can clearly be seen in the degradation of Lady Robinson's Beach and the salinity problems at Towra Point.

Rockdale City Council has recently agreed to pay \$1.017 million towards the renourishment of Lady Robinson's Beach and groyne construction. This is an enormous community cost. Rockdale City Council passed a motion on 9th July 2003 "that it be recognised that this Council did not construct the 2nd runway, 3rd runway, the 1st port development or the extension of the port development..."

We are concerned that reclamation of another 60 hectares, built with an anticipated four million cubic metres of sand dredged from the Bay, will lead to further erosion of Lady Robinson's Beach – a valued community asset – and will result in an ongoing economic burden on Rockdale City Council ratepayers.

Don't spill the poison

An underground toxic plume of chlorinated hydrocarbons is heading towards Botany Bay at an estimated rate of 130 metres per year. The chemical 1,2-dichloroethane (EDC) is the main component of a dangerous cocktail of pollution left by ICI (now Orica) fifteen years ago.

Penrhyn Estuary, located immediately adjacent to the existing container terminal, is an important habitat for migratory birds. More than a dozen migratory waders covered by the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) and the China-Australia

Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) have been recorded visiting the Estuary. There are also many species of shorebirds that forage on the mudflats.

At a public meeting held at Botany RSL in September 2003, a spokesman for Orica admitted that Penrhyn Estuary has already recorded levels of contamination of EDC at two and a half times the accepted levels for marine environments.

Further dredging around the existing port facility would disturb the contamination, which contains other hazardous hydrocarbons – tetrachloroethylene, carbon tetrachloride, trichloroethylene and vinyl chloride. This places wildlife at risk due to the seeping of contaminants into the food chain, but also risks the health of a large number of people that use Botany Bay for recreational activities, such as fishing, swimming, windsurfing and waterskiing.

We strenuously object to any dredging – for either the existing port or for an expansion of facilities – until it can be independently proven that the contamination can be contained. This is a clear case where a precautionary principle must be applied to safeguard the community and valuable ecosystems.

More noise, more pollution, more congestion

The expected tripling of container freight by 2017, combined with Sydney Ports Corporation's plans to concentrate container shipping at Port Botany, places an inequitable burden on residents living along the major routes to and from the Port. This includes our communities in the Rockdale local government area.

The M5 East is already operating at capacity during daylight hours. Additional heavy vehicles transporting freight from Port Botany to Sydney's west, south-west or south, would therefore congest our local roads (General Holmes Drive, Bestic Street, Grand Parade, Bay Street, President Avenue etc). As well as the dangerous situation of more b-doubles on our suburban streets, we would be subjected to more noise and more pollution.

Consider what is best for NSW, not just Sydney Ports

We support the proposal from the Port Kembla Port Corporation to expand the use of Port Kembla as an alternative to expanding Port Botany.

Port Kembla and Port Botany are equidistant from the destination of most of the freight arriving in NSW, namely south-west Sydney. If the Maldon-Dunbarton rail corridor was completed, Port Kembla would have competitive travel and cost efficiencies for freight to SW Sydney compared to Port Botany.

In addition to transport solutions, there are other social benefits that would arise from Port Kembla sharing the container trade. The Illawarra has one of the highest levels of unemployment in Australia. Expansion of port facilities at Port Kembla would provide up to 3,000 jobs where they are most desperately needed.

Sydney Ports Corporation is a commercial operation that considers its own bottom line, not the best interests of all communities in NSW.

Is bigger really better?

A report by Globestar Shipping dated August 2003 questions the need to expand facilities at Port Botany and instead highlights current inefficiencies that are restraining freight handling capacity. It finds that

"Progressive re-configuration of Port Botany may well eliminate the requirement for a third terminal development. This is an objective worth striving for.

The land required for this can be delivered within the existing port footprint."

In an EIS for reconfiguration of their operations at Port Botany, Patricks stated that their development would accommodate future expansion for the next 17 years.

When all the environmental and social costs are considered, along with the viable alternative at Port Kembla, we question the wisdom of proceeding with an expansion of Port Botany.


Cultural and historical significance

One of our Association members has a carefully planned routine for her relatives and friends visiting Sydney for the first time. The first sight-seeing trip is out to Kurnell to Captain Cook's landing place, followed by a drive to the other side of Botany Bay at La Perouse.

Botany Bay is culturally and historically significant to our local area, Sydney and in fact, Australia. We have a common responsibility to halt the damage or there will not be much for our grandchildren and their visitors to value.

In your hands

Thank you for considering this submission and for conducting this inquiry. We trust that your findings will highlight the numerous, unacceptable risks – to both the environment and surrounding communities – associated with the proposal to expand Port Botany. The proposal should not be supported.


27-1-2004