

## Crown Minerals Petroleum Amendment Bill 2018

Hearing statement by Lyndon DeVantier, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Good afternoon,

I am a marine scientist, with a PhD from the University of Queensland and more than 35 years' experience. Although submitting in a private capacity, I am a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission, on the Specialist Group for Reef-building Corals. So my perspective may be somewhat different to other submitters. I also presently reside in Taranaki.

As you no doubt know, coral reefs are one of the 'canaries in the coal mine' of climate change, and during my career, I have documented their rapid decline and the growing threat of their functional extinction, as has happened before in Earth's history, during earlier mass extinctions. It is not just coral reefs that are in massive decline, however. Climate disruption is increasingly impacting other foundations of our life-supporting biosphere and global civilization more generally.

Positive climate feedbacks, including permafrost melt, loss of polar albedo and methane hydrates off continental shelves, are already occurring, harbingers of major tipping points in the climate system. This too has happened before, in several of those mass extinctions that radically reshaped life on Earth. This is the first time though, that the behaviour of a single species is driving such an extinction event.

Hence I fully support the urgent need to stop further mining and combustion of fossil fuels and a rapid transition to clean renewable energy and feedstock for electricity, transport, agriculture and industry. This is a massive task on all scales, from local to global, and the transition has been long delayed. We simply have no more time in which to turn this around. This was well explained in this hearing by Michael Heard, among many others. So I commend the coalition government on holding this public hearing, via the select committee process, on the Bill.

There have been numerous complaints, to this committee and in the media, including from Cameron Madgwick representing PEPANZ earlier today, that the process is too short. But PEPANZ didn't complain about the far less democratic process that resulted in the EEZ Amendment Act 2013 and regulatory changes that, via non-notification, totally excluded public input into decision-making on exploratory drilling. In that case, the previous National government used a Supplementary Order Paper, thereby avoiding the select committee process and public submissions entirely.

Similarly the 'Anadarko Amendment' to the Crown Minerals Act was pushed through parliament under urgency, again with no public input or proper legislative review. In those cases, amendments favoured the fossil fuel industry, and, surprise, surprise, no complaints from PEPANZ re loss of democracy. Indeed it was reported that they, along with senior oil industry executives, had been dealing directly with the Ministers involved, Simon Bridges and Steven Joyce, in so-called 'secret meetings' for which no minutes are available.

Those earlier amendments re exploration were abject failures of prudent governance, particularly given that they occurred subsequent to several IPCC reports and only a few years after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon exploratory drilling catastrophe. That single disaster killed 11 men, caused many billions of dollars in damages, and intergenerational impacts to fisheries and biodiversity.

Other submitters on the Bill have asked what is the message to national and international investors? The message is obvious: New Zealand, and the rest of the world, need to stop looking for, and burning, fossil fuels. Indeed, we needed to stop burning them decades ago. The fossil fuel industry knew this from at least the 1980s, and has deliberately misled the public, via well-funded neo-liberal 'think-tanks' and mass media campaigns, while also lobbying governments to continue with business as usual to delay the transition, as indeed they are doing here now.

That strategy has been highly successful. Last year, more greenhouse gases were emitted to the atmosphere by humanity than at any time in human history, resulting in increasingly strident warnings from climate scientists, all amid the rapid rise of extreme weather events here, and globally.

Locally, the Tasman Sea has been up to six degrees C hotter than 'normal' these past three summers. This may seem like good news, at least for swimmers and surfers, but it's not for the affected ecosystems. As has recently been discovered, these support the world's most diverse assemblage of marine mammals, along with a diverse array of seabirds, many now also threatened with extinction, along with important commercial fisheries, all of which have adapted to a different, much cooler, temperature regime. Elsewhere, the Arctic has been up to 20 degrees C hotter than normal, and is melting rapidly.

Heatwaves, wildfires, superstorms and floods increasingly ravage our planet, taking thousands of lives and creating many billions of dollars of damages annually. At the same time, oceans are rapidly acidifying and becoming increasingly choked with plastics, both directly attributable to our continuing addiction to fossil fuels. These fuels have been perversely subsidized globally, and the true costs of their use have rarely been included in economic analyses, at least prior to Nicolas Stearn's landmark report, a decade ago now.

Since then, smart, ethically-focused investors have been divesting from fossil fuels and investing in clean renewables in droves, in the realization that most known reserves are now stranded assets. There is simply no point looking for more when the science, as confirmed by those radical greenies (I'm joking) at the International Energy Agency and World Bank, tells us that most known reserves must remain in the ground.

Thankfully, New Zealand's present government is now focused on this challenge, and this Bill is a major step in the right direction. Hence I am strongly supportive of the Bill, although I do have several suggestions for changes and points in need of clarification, as listed in my earlier written submission. I do not agree with time extensions for existing permits, any mining activities under conservation lands, or further onshore exploration in Taranaki. Thank you.

Lyndon DeVantier, Okato.