

gasbag



lifting the lid on Browse

Welcome to 2011!

— the year when the Gassy Monster fades from view?

gasbag apologises for having been quiet for a while. You must be wondering what's happening with Browse Basin gas. Aren't we all? There are rumours and counter-rumours: TOs about to announce an agreement with government; TO's not announcing an agreement; Woodside charging protestors with wilful damage (that's a bit rich!); protestors charging Woodside with endangering life; ancient dinosaur footprints threatened; present-day dinosaurs threatened in state parliament. Read the papers to learn more.

WOODSIDE'S SIA monitor, mitigate and manage away!

As if we hadn't had enough Clayton's Social Impact Assessments (see previous **gasbags**), Woodside has been undertaking its very own. It seems we ought to be to feeling thankful that they are so concerned about the social impacts of this folly that they are flying in the bevy of consultants who have written the mysterious mix of dubious facts and figures that are intended to alleviate our concerns. Most seem to have come up with the same catchphrase: 'monitor, mitigate and manage...'

Our sources tell us that presenters are out of touch: the consultant who provided the tourism report had no idea of the existence or significance of any dinosaur footprints. She thought that an online survey of 119 residents asking leading questions such as, 'Do you think anti-gas protesters damage tourism?' (thank you to those who replied in the negative!) was the way to gauge the social impact of a mega-development on this town. A pity about the other 15 000 people.

The consultants' explanation as to why many of the reports were late and the information inadequate: 'Our brief kept on changing...The project keeps getting bigger... We do not have enough information to supply accurate figures, etc.'

Not one consultant had any knowledge of an already existing plan that is the result of genuine community consultation over many years; the Waterbank Structure Plan, launched by State Government a decade ago earmarked James Price Point as a conservation reserve and had a great little plan for residential blocks, small scale industries and tourism ventures along the coast. No social mitigation needed for that one!

We suggest Woodside does a bit of retrospective listening and finds out what the community (and State Government) had already endorsed for this area.

mitigate verb
the worst symptoms have been mitigated
alleviate, reduce, diminish, lessen,
weaken, lighten, attenuate, take the edge
off, allay, ease, assuage, palliate, relieve,
tone down.

gasbag
send it on!

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DO YOU TRUST THIS GOVERNMENT?

Colin Barnett, on the fossil dinosaur footprints near James Price Point:
'The dinosaur prints which are in that area will be protected... [and there would be]...no impact on any heritage site of importance.'

'Now the dinosaur prints, I haven't seen the dinosaur footprints, but they are there, but the plant won't be on top of the dinosaur prints.'

From a report commissioned by Colin Barnett's government:

'The exact location for the proposed Browse LNG precinct indicates a **direct impact** on the sauropod underprints. Their removal or destruction is regrettable...'

'The proposed development of a LNG plant at James Price Point would require significant and possibly ongoing dredging of one or more channels and the construction of groynes and bulkheads... The net impact on dinosaur footprints in the area is unpredictable, but currently exposed sauropod footprints may well become **buried** under sand...'

Colin Barnett, on Perth radio:

'This is a pinprick in a vast landscape.'

Colin Barnett in Houston, Texas:

'...the biggest game in town is the development of mega projects for the export of LNG. These projects...dwarf an other industrial projects in Australia.'

WILL THE GAS HUB GO AHEAD AT JAMES PRICE POINT? WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

Don Voelte – quoted in Sydney Morning Herald, Nov 30, 2010

'As the operator, as the one talking to government, as the one talking to the traditional owners of the land, as one who is talking to the Greens and the NGO's, we know exactly where we stand and we see no roadblocks.'

What the analysts say: Citigroup Global Markets Inc:

Headline: 'Tough road to James Price Point.' [They've seen nothing yet.]

'James Price Point appears less than certain.' [Dead in the water.]

'We believe that of the 5 Browse Joint Venture partners, BHP, Shell and Chevron would prefer an alternative development option, the tieback of the Browse reserves into the North West Shelf.' [That means piping the gas to the Pilbara.]

'One of the key uncertainties for the Browse project is how to deal with the CO2 content in the gas, as there is not yet a commercially viable solution to geosequester the CO2.' [That means they can't put it back into the ground as they said they would.]

'We see plenty of scope for further delays – community opposition, environmental concerns, technical challenges (CO2 in particular), and potentially commercial challenges.

The longer it takes to make a Final Investment Decision on the Browse project, the more attractive the relative economics of the North West Shelf tieback option compared to James Price Point.' [Plenty of scope for further opposition, folks!]

Citigroup thinks James Price Point could be challenged on commercial grounds in 2012, and gives James Price Point a 40% chance of going ahead: that's less than evens for the punter. EK is opening a book.

Jac Nasser, Chairman of BHP, at BHP's AGM in November 2010:

'We've acknowledged that there are technical and other challenges with the James Price Point location.'

'I'd also stress that we won't proceed with any development where our values and standards are compromised in any way.' [He means he doesn't like the idea of compulsory acquisition].