



**Friends of
the Earth**

URGENT CAMPAIGN FUNDING APPEAL

Expression of Interest

Australian Communities Foundation

END ESSO'S POLLUTION PLANS

Stopping the violation of a Ramsar wetland & waste dumping in Bass Strait

The Problem

Friends of the Earth (FoE) has uncovered two urgent issues that, if allowed to go ahead, will set a dangerous precedent as the first major offshore oil and gas decommissioning venture in what has emerged as a US\$40 billion environmental problem.

1. Esso wants to build a massive toxic dump in the middle of a Ramsar-listed wetland, to store more than a dozen multi-storey “topsides” and hundreds of thousands of tonnes of other waste as they slowly break it all down and truck it away. They are in talks with government agencies.
2. The company, which is owned by ExxonMobil and Woodside, also plans to dump most of eight installations into the ocean, including hundreds of thousands of tonnes of recyclable steel.

The sea dumping would take place in Bass Strait, off the coast of Gippsland, Victoria, in Australia's extreme southeast. The onshore breaking yard is planned for the nearby Corner Inlet Ramsar Site, close to the Wilsons Promontory National Park. The area is inhabited by whales, seals and other marine mammals. Most sea life is endemic.

According to industry-funded studies, the breaking yard and sea dumping plan would involve the handling and disposal of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of hazardous radioactive waste (FoE is unaware of any plan to store this waste

indefinitely), asbestos, oil and other hydrocarbons, mercury, lead, and other heavy metals.

Australia is the world's second largest methane gas exporting country. The industry enjoys massive government incentives and subsidies. One way to make gas more expensive to produce is by holding the industry to account for the huge mess it has created in Australian waters, with 110 Sydney Harbour Bridges-worth of recoverable, recyclable steel involved.

FoE's No More Gas Collective has exposed all of this after a years-long campaign, which has included successful lobbying in Federal Parliament and scores of stories published in Australian national media. But our funding runs out in a matter of weeks, meaning that our campaign will come to an end, benefitting the fossil fuel industry and leaving Esso unaccountable.

The Solution

FoE is seeking funding to stop Esso from sea dumping and to force them to bring all material ashore to be properly processed in an environmentally sound, world's-best-practice recycling yard on a brownfield site. We will continue our campaign to have this paid for by the entire industry through an existing taxation instrument (a temporary decommissioning levy imposed after another scandal) that can simply be increased and extended indefinitely to pay for appropriate recycling facilities.

Our campaign will be three-pronged:

Public

- Creation of an "Esso Watch" group of residents' groups, environmental groups, industry and union groups and Traditional Owners to regularly meet and organise campaigns against the plan.
- Using advertising, local publicity, public meetings and targeted social media, facilitate the formation of a "Save Corner Inlet" group and movement.
- Our new RecycleTheRigs.org website is operational and our petition to the government has already been signed by hundreds of people, who will form our online community.
- Compelling video and other content are in the process of being produced for a social media campaign.
- A huge visual stunt has been planned for direct action but is so far unfinanced.

Press

- As evidenced by the almost 100 media stories across Australia that the No More Gas team has generated so far, it has unprecedented access to media. This is largely facilitated by decades-long, previously established relationships across the media industry, as well as a deep journalism skillset. We would continue spotting opportunities and placing stories in the national media that support our campaign.

Politics

- FoE's No More Gas team also has extraordinary access to the halls of Parliament, including an "all access" lobbying pass sponsored by an MP. Our team is in constant liaison with Federal Parliamentarians, largely in the government and cross bench. Esso needs approvals from two ministers, so we would concentrate on the Resources and Environment ministers and their senior advisors while taking any opportunity to apply pressure upon those two from within the government.
- The team has been invited by The Greens to construct several Parliamentary actions that may result in legislative change or the uncovering of facts. This collaboration is ongoing at the highest level within the Parliamentary party.

Our Appeal

The FoE federation has 50 years of experience in grassroots organising and public campaigning and as previous initiatives have proven, it has the power to create significant community and wider political change.

We estimate that a two-years would be long enough to create a new movement and significantly influence policy. So, we are seeking funding for one campaigner for that period, along with a fund for associated campaign costs, an amount of AUD\$250,000 (US\$166,000).

That sum is tiny compared to the tens of billions of dollars it will cost the fossil fuel industry to properly dispose of its retired offshore assets under strict regulatory supervision.

Funding this campaign would serve to protect a precious environmental resource, and make oil and gas production in Australia more expensive, affecting the overall global production of methane and carbon dioxide.

Addressing Assessment

FoE's working philosophy is to approach environmentalism through the lens of social and first peoples' justice.

The Process

1. Theory of Change

The theory of change for this campaign proposal can be summarised as follows:

1. **Identification of Urgent Issues:** Friends of the Earth (FoE) has identified two critical problems related to Esso's pollution plans, involving the potential destruction of a Ramsar wetland and the dumping of waste in Bass Strait.
2. **Campaign Objectives:** The primary objective is to stop Esso from sea dumping and compel them to bring all materials ashore for proper processing in an environmentally responsible manner. This includes advocating for a world's-best-practice recycling yard on a brownfield site.
3. **Strategic Approach:** The campaign employs a three-pronged strategy as outlined: public engagement; media outreach and political advocacy.
4. **Expected Impact:** The campaign aims to create a new movement, influence policy, and hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for proper waste disposal. This will contribute to protecting the environment, making oil and gas production more expensive, and reducing global methane and carbon dioxide emissions.
5. **Resource Needs:** The campaign requires funding for a dedicated campaigner and associated costs to be able to manage this campaign over several years, totaling AUD\$250,000, which is a very tiny fraction of the potential costs to the industry for proper waste disposal.

This theory of change assumes that by raising public awareness, engaging the media, and lobbying policy makers effectively, the campaign can achieve its objectives and bring about positive environmental and regulatory outcomes. The campaign would generate impact and positive change by gathering and coordinating stakeholders. The No More Gas campaign works with the cooperation of much of the wider environmental and union movements, and is an active member of the "National Decommissioning Network" along with the MUA, The Wilderness Society, the Australian Marine Conservation Society, Surfrider Foundation and many other groups. We participate in the "National Gas Chat," "Gas Free Victoria," and other regular meetings with a very wide variety of other environmental groups. Partnerships have already been established with a number of Gippsland organisations including the local Trades and Labour Council.

2. Project outcomes

The project outcomes for this campaign will be structured and measured using a methodology that includes the following elements:

1.. **Structured Methodology for Measurement:**

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be designed to relate to campaign objectives, including petition signatures, media mentions, social media engagement metrics and political actions taken.

2. **Holistic Process of Collating Impact Data:**

Quantitative data will come from various sources, such as website analytics, media monitoring tools, petition platforms, and engagement metrics on social media. Qualitative data will be obtained through surveys, interviews, and feedback from stakeholders, including community groups, media contacts, and political influencers.

3. This data will be consolidated regularly to track progress and evaluate.

3. Ability to Communicate Impact

FoE will develop clear and compelling impact reports that highlight key achievements, challenges faced, and lessons learned.

1. We will employ data visualisation techniques and video to present impact data in a visually engaging manner.
2. Communication strategies will be tailored for different audiences, including funders, supporters, media outlets, and policymakers.

4. Adaptive and Iterative Process

By implementing this structured methodology for measurement, collating impact data comprehensively, effectively communicating impact, and maintaining an adaptive and iterative approach, the campaign can demonstrate its impact, learn from experiences, and continuously improve its effectiveness in achieving its goals.

1. Continuously monitor and evaluate campaign activities against established KPIs to identify areas for improvement and course corrections.
2. Conduct regular reviews and reflections with the campaign team to discuss successes, challenges, and opportunities for optimization.
3. Adjust strategies and tactics based on feedback, emerging trends, and changing circumstances to maximise impact and achieve desired outcomes.

5. Expertise

FoE brings 50 years of very successful grassroots organising and public campaign expertise to this proposal. Our highly-trained campaigners, who work under the guidance of campaigns coordinators and are accountable to their wider collectives, are confident (given our success in other campaigns such as banning native forest logging and a constitutional ban on fracking in Victoria) are justifiably confident in their ability to stop the two Esso projects. The FoE structure and Operations Collective support will ensure the longevity of this campaign. As outline in our

proposal, the No More Gas team is particularly experienced in strategic, high level government and media relations campaigns.

6. Effective Impact

1. Importance of the Issue:

The campaign addresses critical environmental and social concerns, including the protection of a Ramsar wetland, responsible waste disposal, and accountability in the oil and gas industry. These issues are vital not only locally but also globally, considering the impact on marine ecosystems, biodiversity, climate change, and public health.

2. Scalability and Widespread Impact:

The campaign's strategies, such as public engagement, media outreach, and political advocacy, can be replicated and scaled in other regions facing similar challenges with offshore waste disposal and environmental protection. By mobilizing communities, leveraging media platforms, and influencing policy at various levels, the campaign can have a widespread impact beyond its immediate target area. The cost to the fossil fuel industry to properly recover and recycle materials in a responsible way would increase the cost of production of fossil fuels in Australia by billions of dollars. Fossil fuel companies must be accountable for the true cost of their infrastructure being decommissioned in an environmentally sound manner, and that those costs are then taken into account for future infrastructure proposals.

3. Direct Positive Benefits and Future Potential:

Success in stopping Esso's pollution plans and promoting responsible waste management would directly benefit the Ramsar wetland, marine life in Bass Strait, and local communities dependent on these ecosystems. The campaign's advocacy for industry-wide accountability and proper recycling facilities can lead to long-term benefits, including improved environmental standards, and reduced pollution.

4. Efficient Fund Utilisation:

The campaign's budget allocation of AUD\$250,000 is relatively modest compared to the potential costs of environmental damage from unchecked waste dumping, and the billions of dollars in subsequent investment required by the industry. Funds will be utilized efficiently by supporting essential campaign activities, such as staffing, public outreach, media engagement, and political lobbying, all aimed at achieving measurable impact and advancing campaign objectives. All spending would be accounted for and dispersed by FoE's highly effective Operations Collective.

Our Achievements so far

Over just 18 months, our No More Gas campaigners have achieved the following:

- Very recently uncovered Esso's plans to dump eight oil platform jackets into Bass Strait and build a toxic dump and breaking yard in the Corner Inlet Ramsar site.
- Through ongoing engagement with senior advisers in the Federal Resources Minister's office, we helped convince the Minister to commission a \$4m roadmap to decommissioning, which is now being finalised.
- Convinced the Victoria State Government to ask for a \$200m platform recycling yard paid for by the levy at the next national resources ministers' meeting.
- Convinced the South Australian state government to ask for \$2b to build a new heavy-lifting decommissioning ship at the same meeting.
- Generated a promise from the Federal Climate and Energy Minister and several cross-bench MPs including Senators Wilkie and Pocock to take up the levy and recycling with the Federal Resources Minister.
- Generated public responses from government on decommissioning at least 5 times
- Almost 100 media stories on decommissioning and related matters in major metropolitan, local and industry media.
- Convinced Four Corners to do a story on decommissioning, which is being investigated.
- Uncovered the fact that there are 2500 retired and unmonitored offshore wells and a 10-year leaking Santos well which is now being explored as a strategic legal issue.
- Exposed the fact Australia's rogue methane emissions are grossly underreported (prompting a review by the Climate Change Minister) and the maladministration of the Northern Endeavour decommissioning.
- Cultivated existing contacts and established many new relationships and alliances with Federal MPs, advisers, officials and other leaders and campaigners across the landscape.

Links to a selection of media stories we've generated so far:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-07-12/controversy-over-essos-plans-to-dismantle-offshore-gas-rigs/104076538>

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/audacious-bid-to-dump-old-oil-rigs-on-bass-strait-sea-floor-20240312-p5fbpl.html>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-19/oil-gas-infrastructure-decommission-expensive-safety-oil-spill/102854308>

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2024/04/02/offshore-oil-gas-rig-decommissioning-fossil-fuels/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/14/retired-santos-gas-wells-off-western-australia-coast-leaking-for-a-decade-regulator-says>

<https://www.energynewsbulletin.net/exploration/news/1454409/climate-demand-oil-gas-industry-clean-offshore>

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/western-australia/santos-wells-have-been-leaking-gas-into-the-ocean-off-wa-for-a-decade-20230612-p5dg0d.html>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-01/methane-emissions-from-offshore-oil-gas-energy-under-reported/101912200>

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/call-for-clarity-on-57b-oil-and-gas-ocean-clean-up-bill-20230202-p5chle.html>

<https://thewest.com.au/news/environment/study-sparks-alarm-at-methane-leak-levels-c-9600890>

https://petroleumaustralia.com.au/news_article/foea-proposes-a-recycling-centre-for-decommissioned-rigs/

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2023/05/14/activists-warn-spill-radioactive-risks-from-australian-vessel-decommissioning.html>

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2023/05/15/activists-warn-of-oil-spill-radioactive-risks-from-decommissioning-of-australian-vessel>

<https://thepoint.net.au/new-northern-endeavour-on-the-horizon/>

<https://www.energynewsbulletin.net/exploration/news/1462990/offshore-oil-gas-decommissioning-activists-gun-sight>

<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/geelongtimes/news/geelong-mooted-as-possible-site-for-major-recycling-centre/>