

Expression of Concern at Proposal to Construct Gas-Processing Hub at James Price Point, on the coast of the Dampier Peninsula, in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia

17-25 September 2009

This document expresses concern at the recently-announced proposal to exploit natural petroleum gas resources of the Browse Basin by installing a pipe-line and gas-processing hub on the coast of the Dampier Peninsula, Western Australia.

This expression of concern is directed to the State Government of Western Australia, the Federal Government of Australia, and all or any of their corporate industrial partners who may be engaged in exploiting mineral resources of the Browse Basin.

Signatories to this document are professional scientists with special research interests in geological and biological evidence relating to the discipline of Vertebrate Palaeontology (the study of extinct vertebrate animals) and, more specifically, in terrestrial ecosystems of the Mesozoic Era (the 'Age of Dinosaurs'). These shared concerns are expressions of personal opinion and should not be interpreted as the views of any particular organizations or professional bodies.

Recently the State Government of Western Australia announced a well-advanced proposal to exploit natural gas resources of the Browse Basin by installing a pipe-line and gas-processing plant in the region of James Price Point, on the western coast of the Dampier Peninsula. The announcement provoked widespread and serious concern because Dampier Land is the western part of the Kimberley region, recognized internationally as one of the last five great wilderness areas remaining on this planet.* The first geological survey of the Dampier region was undertaken as recently as 1947, and much of the Kimberley remains unexplored to this day. Recent ecological investigations (2007-09) reported "amazing" diversity of animals and "countless" new and hitherto unknown species of plants.* In addition the Kimberley coastline was described as "spectacular and fragile". It seems singularly inappropriate to site major industrial developments in such a pristine environment, especially as its natural resources still await scientific investigation.

The proposal for a gas-processing hub mentioned merely that there were reports of dinosaur tracks in the area. In fact, the Dampier coast has provided practically the entire fossil record of dinosaurs in the western half of the Australian continent (the exceptions being a few small fragments of bone). Coastal exposures of the Broome Sandstone between Broome and Cape Leveque yield unique and richly informative insights into terrestrial ecosystems of Early Cretaceous age (approximately 132 million years old) and have been the focus of ongoing scientific research since 1991. The ancient Cretaceous landscapes were buried intact, and today those fossil landscapes are being exhumed by coastal erosion, revealing the original topography, with soils, leaf-litter and plants such as cycads and ferns still in their original position of growth. The sites also contain evidence of invertebrate animals and crocodiles, but the most impressive fossils are the tracks of dinosaurs, some of them in densely-packed profusion. There are at least 15 different types of dinosaur tracks, representing every major group of the Dinosauria.† Some types are extremely rare, even unique; others represent dinosaurs that ranked among the largest yet known to science. Today one may walk across those ancient landscapes, following the tracks

of dinosaurs as they meandered between the clumps of vegetation more than 130 million years ago. Few sites on Earth afford such opportunities to explore ancient terrestrial ecosystems in such complete and undisturbed condition.[†] The dinosaurian track-sites of the Dampier coast are rare and precious resources, with no parallel in other parts of Australia. They deserve to be protected, rather than jeopardised by industrial developments. Some of the most important sites happen to be situated in the central western sector of the Dampier coast - where they face the greatest risk of damage or degradation if industrial development is allowed to proceed in the region of James Price Point.

The proposed development should not be envisaged as an inconspicuous pipe-line. It entails the establishment of an exclusion zone (no go area) along the coast, the construction of a jetty (perhaps 2-3 km), an industrial precinct occupying 2,500 hectares of land and 1,000 hectares of sea, an extensive series of chemical processing plants and a factory to utilise by-products in the manufacture of agricultural fertiliser. The transit of heavy traffic (hundreds of trucks per day) will require the construction of the first sealed roads, and there must also be facilities to accommodate the labour-force and support staff. Then, with gas on tap, it may become economically feasible to commence bauxite mining and to build an aluminium smelter.

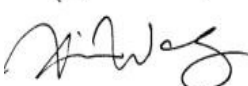

The proposal to site these industrial developments at James Price Point is manifestly the 'quick, cheap and easy' option. Other options exist, such as a pipe-line north-eastwards to Darwin, where the requisite infrastructure is already planned in order to exploit petroleum resources of the Timor Sea. Another option is a pipe-line south-eastwards to the Pilbara mining and industrial region. A third option is processing at the wellhead - loading the gas straight into tankers - which might be appropriate as most of it (>80%) is destined for export anyway. We urge decision-makers at all stages - federal, state and corporate - to adopt one of these (or similar) options, thus preserving the integrity of the Kimberley and its wealth of natural and scientific treasures.



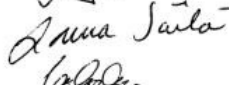
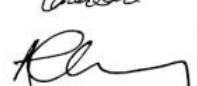
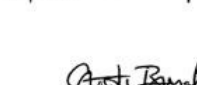
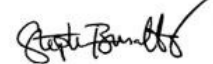




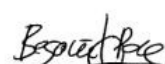


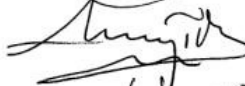

*:Taggart, D. 2009. Pristine, precious and threatened. *Zoo Times* (Royal Zoological Society of South Australia), March 2009: 14-15.

[†] Thulborn, T. 2009. *Dinosaur Tracks of the Broome Sandstone, Dampier Peninsula, Western Australia - interim review*. A report prepared for the Kimberley National Heritage Assessment, Natural & Indigenous Heritage Branch, Australian Federal Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts. November 2009, 25 pp.



Attached: Signatures of 86 scientists from 16 countries, the great majority being participants in the **10th International Symposium on Mesozoic Terrestrial Ecosystems and Biota**, organized principally by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and held at Teruel, Spain, in September 2009.













(Photocopies are appended. Original signatures, on multiple copies of this document, are available for verification.)


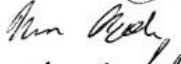

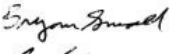
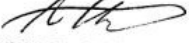



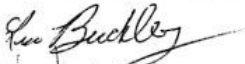


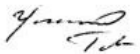
Signature	Name	Institutional affiliation _ Country	Date
	TONY HULBORN	UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA	18/9/2009
Martin Lockley	MARTIN LOCKLEY	UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER	18/9/2009
Vanda Santos	Vanda Santos	MUSEO NACIONAL DE HISTORIA NATURAL UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA	18/9/2009
William A Clemons	William A Clemons	University of California Berkeley	18/9/2009
Ricardo Pérez de la Fuente	Ricardo Pérez	UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA (UG)	18/9/2009
Jaime Ortega		UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA	18/9/2009
	Nieves LOPEZ-MARTINEZ	Universidad Complutense Madrid	18/9/2009
P. M. by	Carlos Martin	Univ. Barcelona	
	Xin Wang	Nanjing Inst Geology & Palaeontology	18/9/2009
	UXUE VILLANUEVA-AMADOZ	UNIVERSITY OF ZARAGOZA	18/9/2009
	LARA CHO-COBARI	MEX	18/9/2009
	FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ MARTÍN	UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID	18/9/2009
	A. Schmidt	Univ. of Goettingen/Germany	18/9/2009

	CLEMENT COIFFARD	UCB Lyon 1	28/09/09
	S. SWEETMAN	UNIVERSITY OF ABERYSTWYTH UK	18/09/09
	LAURA SÄLLI	U. of Helsinki, Finland	18/09/09
	IAN CORRIE	"	"
	ANUSUYA CHINSAMY-TORAN	University of Cape Town, South Africa	18/09/09
	STEPHEN BRUSATTE	AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY	18/09/09
	PAUL SELDEN	UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS PALEONTOLOGICAL INSTITUTE	19/09/09
	ANNA TORQUERA	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	19/09/09
	ANDRES SANTOS-CABEZA	INSTITUT CATALA DE PALEONTOLOGIA (SPAIN)	19/09/09
	Dilbert Garcia	"	"
	Begoña Pérez Tabata	Consorcio Rete Urruñe	19/09/09
	Luis Alcalá	Fundación Universidad	19/09/09
	Rafael Ruyón Torres	Fundación Biogolú	19/09/09
	Manuel Mejiade	ICNOLOGIA ESPAÑA (SPAIN)	19/09/09
	ICARIAN FREGENAL	UNIV. COMPLU- TENISE-MADRID SPAIN	19/09/09

	Gualy Juliet Termin	SDSMT	12/11/03
	Fernando Barbaso	UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE MADRID	18/11/09
	Carla Rocha	universidade de Coimbra	18/09/09
	OSCAR CABRERA-ROD	UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACION A DISTANCIA	18/09/09
	CARMEN SORIANO	UNIVERSITE RENNES I / ESRF	18/09/09
	Didier Néraudeau	UNIVERSITE RENNES I	18/09/09
	Romain VELLO	UNIVERSITE RENNES 1	18/09/09
	Vincent PERRICHOT	University of Kansas	18/09/09
	Mónica Solazano K.	University of Rennes.	18/09/09
	Verónica Díez	Universidad del País Vasco	18/09/09
	Jean Le Gac	Musee des Minéraux Epinay France	18.09.09
	Kamben Laprasert	Maha Sorakham University	18.09.09.
	F. ORTEGAS	UNED - CIENCIAS - MADRID SPAIN.	18-09-09
	ELISABET CANALS	MUSEU NACIONAL HISTORIC VICENT - LISBONA (PORTUGAL)	18-09-09
	Miquel Moreno	Universidad de Zaragoza	18-09-09
	José Manuel Galca	Universidad de Zaragoza	18/09/09
	NANCY HEGBY SCHWEIZER	North Carolina State UNIVERSITY	9-18-09
	LAURA PIÑUELA	MUSEO DEL JURASICO DE ASTURIAS Y UNIVERSIDAD DE OVIEDO	18-9-09
	GONZALEZ RIGA, B.J.	CUYO UNIVERSITY, MEXICO	18-09-09

	Miguel Torres	University of Zaragoza	19/9/09
	Carolina Fuenlabia	Icnolog. Sonia (Spain)	19-9-09
	ANGEL GALOBART	INSTITUT CATALA DE PALEONTOLOGIA	19/09/2009
	JOSEP FORTUNY	INSTITUT CATALA DE PALEONTOLOGIA	19/09/2009
	Jingeng SHI	Kangjing Inst. of Geol. & palaeont. CAS	19/09/2009
	Joane BUÉCHE	European Synchrotron Radiation Facility Grenoble, France Paleontologist	19/09/2009
	Jean-Jacques MAZIN	CNRS. University Lyonn	19/09/2009
	HARUFUMI NISHIDA	University of Chuo Todyo, Japan 獣医学部	19/09/2009
	Péter Gulyás	Kötvös Univ. Department of Paleontology Hungary, H-1117 Budapest, Pázmány Péter stny. 1/C.	23.09.2009.
	Louis C. Jacobs	SMU, Dallas, USA	23 Sept 09
	Ralph E. Molnar	MNA, Flagstaff, USA	24/9/09
	David Rubilar-Rogers	Museo Nacional de Historia Natural CHILE	23/09/09

	P.G. GILL.	UK.	23 Sept. 09.
Constanze Bickelmann Florian Wittemann	Bickelmann, Constanze Wittemann, Florian	MFN Berlin, Germany MFN Berlin, Germany	23.09.09 23.09.09
	ROBERTO XURY	UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE	23.9.2009
	SENGVATA	IMMIA	23/09/2009
	X. PANADES BLAS	UNIVERSITY OF / UK BRISTOL	23/09/09
	DARLOW JARKE	JERICHIA II ROYAL TYFLORE MUSEUM OF PALEONTOLOGY	SEPT. 23/2009.
Patricia E. Rebec	Patricia E. Rebeck	University of Calgary, Alberta CANADA	Sept. 23, 2009
	Carole Burrow	Old Museum, Australia	25/9/09
	Bruce Burrow	Old Health, Brisbane Australia	25/09/2009
	ANNE WARREN	LA TROBE UNIV. AUSTRALIA	25/09/2009
	XING XU	Institute of Vert. Paleon. & Palaeontol. Beijing	25/09/2009
	Emmanuel FARA	Univ. de Bourgogne, France	25/09/2009
	CHRIS GLEN	UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA	25/09/2009
	Rich McLean	Senaridgeon Palaeontology Research Centre	25/09/2009

	Marissa K. Westerfield	Texas Tech Univ. Lubbock, TX	Sept. 25, 2009
	Karen Poole	George Washington University, USA	9/25/2009
	Torsten v. d. Lubbe	Landesmuseum Hannover, Niedersachsen, Germany	25.09.2009
	Bryan Small	Denver Museum of Nature & Science, Colorado, USA	25/09/2009
	Adam Huttenbaker	University of Washington, Seattle USA	25-09-2009
	BENT LINNAE	NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF DENMARK, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK	26/9-2009
	Peter Knochler	Smithsonian Inst. Washington, DC	Sept. 25, 09
	Julia McHugh	Univ. of Iowa/USA	09/25/2009
	Lisa Buckley	Peace Region Paleontology Research Centre	Sept 25, 2009
	Veronica Kraparokva	UBA, Buenos Aires Argentina	Sept 26, 2009
	Thomas Kaiser	University Hamburg, Germany	Sept. 26, 2009
	Yasamin Tulu	Michigan State University East Lansing, MI 48823 USA	Sept 26, 2009