



Addressing Westport's environmental challenge

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Environment a priority in planning Perth's new port

Western Australia is planning for a new container port to best meet the State's future trade needs. After undertaking a thorough study program and intense stakeholder engagement, the State Government has endorsed the Westport Taskforce's recommended location and footprint design for Western Australia's next primary container port.

The new, land-backed style of port will be adjacent to the Kwinana Industrial Area between the existing Alcoa and Kwinana Bulk Terminal jetties. The port will utilise Anketell Road as its major freight route.

Building a new container port in a sensitive environment presents many challenges that need to be carefully planned and managed. How is the Westport process tackling the environmental issues, and how can the community have confidence in Westport's process?

Environmental considerations have been weighted heavily during Westport's work to date, including the options assessment process. This was facilitated by a collaborative, transparent and science-based approach.

That emphasis on the environment and its priority in the process will be taken forward into the next phase of Westport's work, which aims to achieve both economic growth and conservation, and ensure ecosystem health can be protected for future generations.

For more background on Westport's work to date and the initiatives and collaborations to which Westport is committed to help preserve the marine environment of Cockburn Sound, please read *Westport Beacon 10: Preserving the marine environment*.



Acting in the community's interest

The Westport process has maintained an unwavering focus on getting the best possible outcomes – including environmental outcomes – for the community, industry and the State.

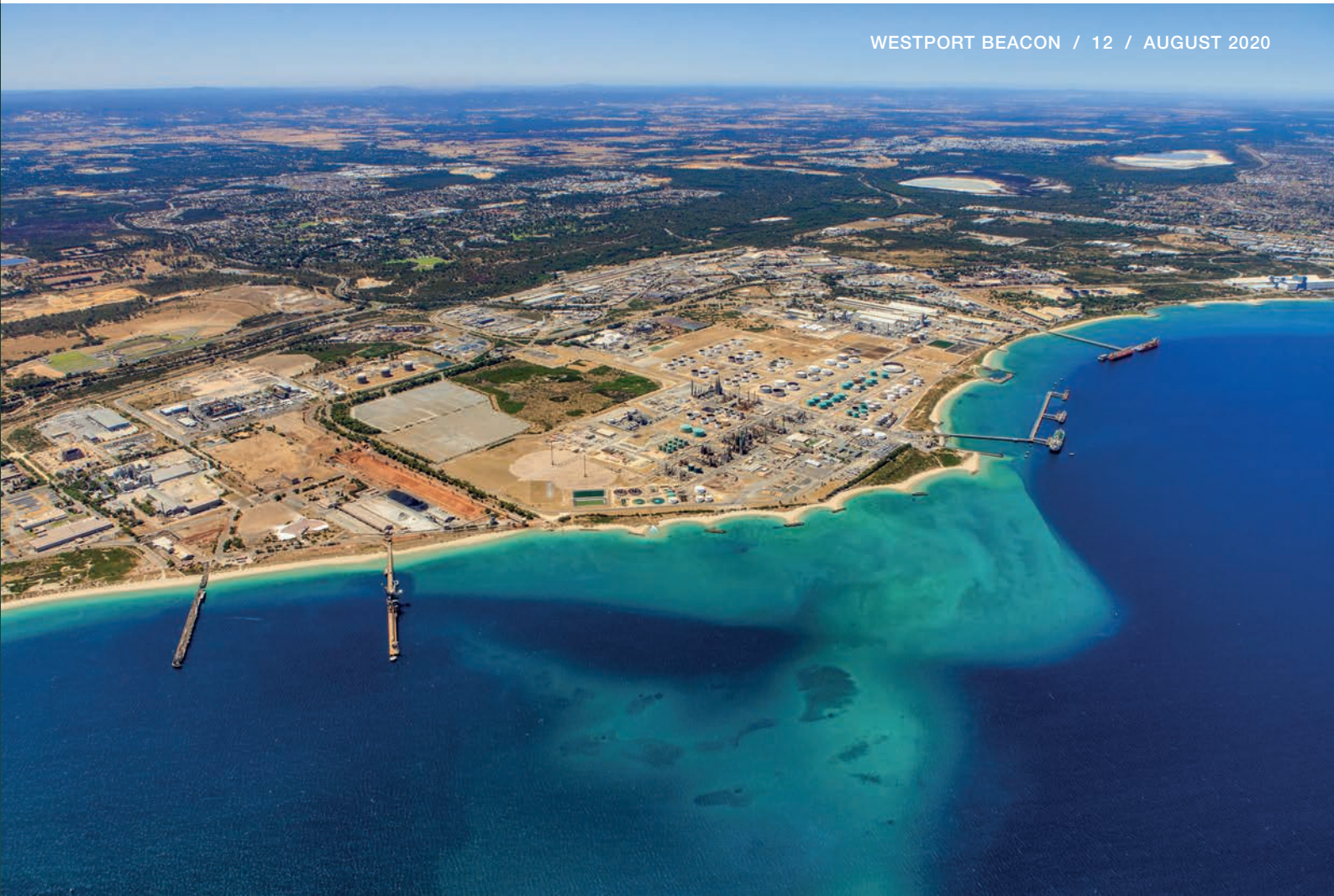
Delivering win-win outcomes is not achieved in isolation. From the outset, Westport has adopted Working with Nature principles and UN Sustainable Development Goals and implemented the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA) framework.

Westport has embraced a transparent, inclusive and collaborative approach and encouraged stakeholders to voice concerns and actively participate in finding solutions. We considered and valued all input, actively responded to concerns, and made sure to incorporate ideas from working groups into the option identification, shortlisting and multi-criteria assessment processes.

The project started from scratch and developed potential port footprints that took into account environmental considerations.

Westport's environmental, social and heritage criteria were collaboratively developed and thoroughly scrutinised prior to adoption for the assessment process. They accounted for more than 40% of the total score for each option.

This resulted in lower scores for options with more significant environmental impacts, and led to early gains for both the marine environment (e.g. options that required lower amounts of dredging scored better than those which required more dredging), and the terrestrial environment (where options with an impact on the ecologically and culturally significant Mt Brown area, adjacent to the Beeliar Regional Park, were unsuccessful).



In order to better understand what the community values in the region were and make decisions that would respect them, Westport commissioned the University of Western Australia (UWA) to develop a survey of community values relating to port development and operation in Fremantle, Cockburn Sound and Bunbury. The survey data was used to test the outcomes of the options assessment process, with the results indicating that Westport's assessment had the right balance between competing interests, and that our environmental and social criteria accurately reflected community concerns.

Scientists and institutions on board

Going forward, delivering the best possible environmental and social outcomes will remain a core objective for the Westport project. To this end, Westport established the Resilience Building Working Group (RBWG) in May 2020.

The working group currently consists of more than 20 senior scientists and environmental managers and is developing a plan for restoring Cockburn Sound health and resilience. Opportunities and initiatives will be evaluated and feasibility studies and field trials will commence within 12 months.

Westport has consistently used the best available science and information.

Following the science

A critical success factor will be to ensure that decisions continue to be underpinned by robust and independent science.

In its work to date, Westport has consistently used the best available science and information. The Western Australian Marine Science Institute (WAMSI), the Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI), UWA, and several well-respected environmental consultants completed reviews that informed the options assessment process and ensured a science-based approach.

It is critical that future planning and design decisions are supported by accurate science and that will require a serious scientific effort. Therefore, we continue to work closely with the science community, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Department of Primary Industries and Resources Development (DPIRD), and other stakeholders to develop a robust and comprehensive science plan.

Image: Brett Crisafulli, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Government of Western



Westport's Social and Environmental Science Plan includes five components:

1. baseline monitoring and surveys;
2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) related investigations;
3. resilience building investigations;
4. sustainability investigations; and
5. social and heritage investigations.

In addition, it includes a commitment to support a comprehensive marine science program in the region and funding to further the development of improved analysis tools required for an enhanced (cumulative) EIA process.

Westport is working closely with DWER and the Cockburn Sound Management Council (CSMC) to improve the environmental monitoring program in Cockburn Sound and establish a detailed environmental baseline (Component 1). This work will commence within the next 12 months and will include seagrass mapping, groundwater and surface water quality mapping, as well as water quality, sediment quality and plankton surveys across Cockburn Sound. Westport also plans to undertake, in association with other agencies, a range of terrestrial environmental investigations (e.g. vegetation, flora and fauna, and wetlands surveys).

Component 2, besides EIA-specific investigations and modelling, includes a number of projects to address important knowledge gaps and establish several dedicated research programs. These will help improve future environmental management and inform initiatives to improve ecosystem health and resilience in Cockburn Sound.

Two areas of focus are seagrass health and marine fauna (including pink snapper, blue swimmer crabs, little penguins and bottlenose dolphins).

The resilience-building work (Component 3) is a key component of Westport's commitment to protect long-term ecosystem health and biodiversity in Cockburn Sound. It will be defined as a result of the outcomes of the Resilience Building Working Group later in 2020.

Sustainability investigation studies (Component 4) will commence once the port and supply chain design is better defined, while the social and heritage investigations (Component 5) include various social studies, including recreational and commercial fishing impact studies.

The environmental program put forward by Westport is both comprehensive and forward thinking and will, besides resulting in an improved understanding of the entire system, facilitate the development of an enduring and equitable marine spatial planning strategy for Cockburn Sound benefiting user groups, the community and the environment.

A shared end goal

The Westport approach has consistently aimed for legitimacy and credibility with all stakeholders.

Westport is committed to ensure that the health of Cockburn Sound and surrounds is preserved. It is genuinely striving to achieve the best environmental and social outcomes, evidenced by its strong focus on a transparent and collaborative approach and reliance on independent, robust science. This should foster confidence in a genuine commitment to achieve both economic growth and conservation outcomes, and to ensure environmental and social values in Cockburn Sound can be protected for generations to come.

Where can I find out more information?

For more details on Westport's future port and supply chain options and recommendations, please visit mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/westport

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