

PORTS — KIMBERLEY MARINE SUPPORT BASE

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.57 pm]: Thank you for letting me deliver a statement tonight. I very briefly want to speak about something a constituent asked me to—Kimberley Marine Support Base at the port of Broome. I have had some concerned residents, including the impressive group at Environs Kimberley, contact me about this. They are concerned about the proposed private floating wharf development in the state-owned port. It is certainly of concern to them and they are concerned that it is based on some problematic assumptions, which they have asked me to raise. The heart of the concern is frankly around that it is based on a business case that makes little sense. *The Australian Financial Review* talked about the floating wharf having a revenue of \$55 million by 2027. That is quite a lot given that in 2023, the existing port of Broome has only \$23 million of revenue and that requires \$2.5 million from the Western Australian government. The future cruise ship industry is not going to get anywhere close to that and there will be no containerisation with currently no industries that require it. There are big concerns that this wharf is based around a gamble in trying to attract new larger oil and gas developments in the region—Browse and others. There is also talk about the Roebuck Bay oil and gas development, even though no projects are yet approved there. Buru Energy is another potential user, but again no decision has been made.

There are serious concerns from this constituency that the wharf may be based on some gambles around exporting oil and gas, and the likelihood of that happening is not strong. That is a key issue they wanted me to raise. In summary, they put it to me that the whole financial case for the project rests on very speculative and uncertain ground. The questions they posed are that although the government claims it will not contribute to the project, what are the implications for government if the project falls over? Is the government going to end up ultimately having to take over and continuing to operate a port at a loss at taxpayers' expense, or will it spend taxpayer money removing the floating wharf? What is that going to cost?

Not surprisingly, another key concern from Environs Kimberley and others is what the impact of this project will be on the environment—what will be the impact of pile driving on the diverse coral community, or the impact of shipping on the rare and threatened snubfin dolphins and the seagrass beds where turtles and dugong feed. Environs Kimberley has written to the Minister for Ports, David Michael, and it is awaiting a response. The letter closes with a final paragraph, which I think is worth reading —

Because of the multiple risks outlined above, including the potential financial risk to the WA public if projected revenues are not obtained, we recommend that an urgent inquiry be undertaken into the financial viability of this project, the workability of the floating jetty given the tides and the questionable job forecasts.

It is important this is done urgently so that the Cook government can disendorse this proposal before any substantial work has been undertaken and environmental damage done.

House adjourned at 6.00 pm
