



CCG President Speaks at the Shire of Exmouth Meeting
10th October, 2017.

**REZONING OPENS THE WAY FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION OF EXMOUTH
GULF**

My name is Denise Fitch, President of the Cape Conservation Group. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I will speak to Agenda Item 12.8 – Scheme Amendment No. 32 – Adoption for Advertising.

The Subsea 7 proposal for Heron Point is a major industrial development. Every aspect of its construction and operation will have a significant impact on our community and its special environment.

We understand that the site at Heron Point is ideal for the *proponent's needs*. The problem is that the proponent's needs are not even remotely ideal for Heron Point. Even worse, they're not suitable for the Gulf. And they will affect the many people, locals and tourists, who use the Heron Point area for recreation and for their tourism businesses. Anyone who thinks their access to Heron Point and their experience of the Gulf won't be affected by Subsea 7 is dreaming.

The Gulf is a unique place, a globally important place. It's a whale calving ground and nursery. The IUCN and other agencies say it has World Heritage values, especially the Western Gulf.

Up until now the Gulf's special ecological values have been respected. That respect has been written into the Shire's codes. About land use, about activities allowed in or near its waters, and about what can be built along it. That's why it doesn't look like Kwinana or like Dampier or Port Hedland. Locals and tourists all flock to the Gulf because of that, because it's been looked after.

The item being put forward by the Shire tonight is the first step in winding back the rules that have kept Exmouth Gulf the way it is up till now. It hasn't been done as part of a strategic planning process with proper public discussion. It's being presented to us tonight as a *fait accompli*. And we get a couple of weeks to scramble and get across the detail and have our say afterwards. Not much of a process.

The first point I make is that changes to zoning and land use are normally done on principle. The same with changes to the definitions of land use. And tonight, both are being put forward, not to meet a principle, but to satisfy the needs of one business. This smooths the way for Subsea 7. In other words, what we're seeing is a *proposal-driven policy*. This isn't good governance at any level of government.



It is not, to quote the Commissioner, ‘exemplary’, because it sets a terrible precedent. It means that down the track, other corporations can expect to get a little love from Shire too. You change the rules for one, and you get pressured into doing it for others. And you might ask yourself, when was the last time this Shire changed the Town Planning Scheme to satisfy an ordinary ratepayer? Someone point him out and I’ll buy him a beer.

The second point is this. The changes to the Town Planning Scheme on the Agenda tonight have serious implications for the Gulf well beyond the Subsea 7 proposal. If they’re passed, the Gulf will be exposed to industrial development in a way that was impossible before today. The framework we’ve worked under so successfully and responsibly up until now will have begun to be dismantled. And that’s a tragedy.

My third point is pretty simple, even though it’s a bit awkward to say. We don’t have an elected Council. And we’re only a week or so out from Council elections. So why is this matter being brought forward tonight, when it could have waited a few more weeks? And that’s what’s causing so much alarm. What’s going on here? Why is this proposal so special? Is Subsea 7 getting special treatment? And why the lack of openness? What’s the rush? Especially when very soon this could all be discussed and voted on by elected representatives of this community. By locals. By ratepayers. Not just one individual who has not been elected.

This is too big a matter to leave in the hands of a single appointee. I say this without prejudice and with all due respect. I’m not questioning the integrity or competence of the Commissioner. Just making the point to underline how critical and how exceptional a decision like this is. It will have a long-lasting impact on our future, on those of us who’ll be here long after the Commissioner’s tenure ends. Shire should accept the gravity of what it’s brought before us tonight. It should recognize its mistake and set the matter aside until we have an elected Council.

We live in a special place. That’s why most of us are here. But that makes us the custodians of one of the world’s natural wonders. So people all over the country are watching us. They expect us to act responsibly and put the protection of the Reef first. And to safeguard the Reef, we must protect the Gulf. And now, in the wake of the Shire’s recent troubles, there’s an extra burden of scrutiny. We’re a long way up the highway in Exmouth. Easy to assume no one will notice, but believe me, there are people paying attention.

There’s a Council election in just over a week. This is a decision Exmouth representatives should make.

So with respect, I move that Agenda Item 12.8, together with the matter of changing land use zoning and the change of definitions of ‘industry’ and ‘light industry’, at Exmouth Station be removed from tonight’s Agenda and that the matter be decided only after a democratically elected Council is in place.