

CORRECTED VERSION

PORT OF MELBOURNE SELECT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the proposed lease of the port of Melbourne

Melbourne — 30 September 2015

Members

Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips — Chair

Mr Daniel Mulino — Deputy Chair

Mr Greg Barber

Mr Damian Drum

Mr Craig Ondarchie

Mr James Purcell

Ms Harriet Shing

Ms Gayle Tierney

Staff

Secretary: Mr Keir Delaney

Research officer: Mr Anthony Walsh

Witnesses

Mr Martin Wurt, Secretary, and

Ms Narelle Wilson, Vice-President, Maribyrnong Truck Action Group.

The CHAIR — The committee will resume with representatives from the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group. I welcome Mr Martin Wurt, the secretary of the group, and Ms Narelle Wilson, the vice-president of the group.

The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you give today is protected by law; however, any comments made outside the hearing may not be so protected. All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript in the next couple of days.

I now invite you to make an opening statement of no more than 5 minutes, and the committee will then proceed to questions.

Ms WILSON — MTAG welcomes the opportunity to speak here today. We are a resident-based lobby group advocating for a reduction in truck numbers on residential streets in the inner western suburbs of Melbourne. We are concerned about the impacts of heavy freight traffic generated by the port of Melbourne and particularly the detrimental health and safety impacts that it poses. Residents have been calling for solutions for over 15 years. During that time government after government has failed to address the problem, and truck numbers have continued to grow. The sale of the lease of the port of Melbourne must be contingent on a commitment to finally address this problem. We will show you a short video just to show what it is like to live in the city of Maribyrnong.

Visual presentation.

Mr WURT — We have no sound. Sound is crucial to this. This is useless without sound.

The CHAIR — I think we are going to have to proceed without sound.

Ms SHING — That might be something that could be provided to the committee to watch at a later date.

Ms WILSON — Okay, that would be great.

Mr WURT — Basically this video is showing what the residential aspects around neighbourhoods are versus what the reality is of having the port of Melbourne using our residential streets as freight routes. We have heard from the CEO of the port of Melbourne saying that they have good road infrastructure coming into the port, which we do not believe that we have. Unfortunately the impact of that video was just lost. Can we just skip that video slide and start it at the one after that? Don't you just love technical issues?

Ms WILSON — Nick Easy, the CEO of the Port of Melbourne said in his presentation to this committee:

We have a good road network system that supports the port of Melbourne today ...

Every day 22 000 trucks use our narrow residential streets, and up to 72 per cent of them are container trucks. They go through countless school and pedestrian crossings; they go metres past our childcare centres, kinders and schools; they drive past our houses as we are trying to sleep at night, metres from cyclists; and they get stuck in endless traffic congestion.

This railway bridge in Footscray is Melbourne's most-hit bridge, with containers regularly toppling onto the adjacent footpath. I am sure you will agree that the road network supporting Australia's largest container port is anything but good.

A technical problem.

Mr WURT — Sorry. We have just lost our presentation again.

Ms WILSON — I will keep going anyway. Nick Easy also told this committee that the cost of moving containers on road is ultimately cheaper than rail, but he is clearly not taking into account who is actually paying the real cost for moving containers by road.

The City of Maribyrnong has the highest hospital admissions rate for children for respiratory illness, as well as an asthma rate that is 50 per cent higher than the Victorian average. Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen, and there is no safe level of exposure. Earlier this year the Peter MacCallum cancer hospital, in a government submission, named diesel exhaust as a high-priority air pollution issue and highlighted the City of Maribyrnong as a diesel pollution hotspot. It would be great if we could get those slides back up.

The major freight routes — we are supposed to have a map in front of us that shows the major freight routes and their location, with all the schools and childcare centres.

Mr WURT — You will find there is a hard copy of that freight route in the information package you have got there. It is the map showing the location of childcare centres. We are back in business.

Ms WILSON — Thousands of trucks pass these schools, kinders and childcare centres every day as they shortcut from the port of Melbourne, which is shown in red, to the industrial areas, which are shown in blue. These trucks are literally metres from the children — as you can see up on the slide there — every single day of their primary school life, exposing them to unsafe levels of carcinogenic air pollution, not to mention the constant cost of repair to damaged infrastructure.

The City of Maribyrnong is currently subsidising the cost of moving containers by road with our health, safety and residential amenity.

Mr WURT — Thanks, Narelle. I want to speak a bit more about other impacts that the port is having on our community. My slide is not going to come up.

Basically what MTAG is saying to you — to the committee — today is that now is the time to green the port of Melbourne. We have got major problems with how the port moves freight through our neighbouring communities. Unfortunately with the problems with our presentation, you did not quite see all the slides, but I am sure you get an idea there. There are trucks just metres from kids playing in school playgrounds. Every day that is happening, and it is unjust. It is an issue that successive governments and port management have failed miserably to address over the last 15 years that the community has been calling for action.

Ports in general contribute enormously to the surrounding air pollution issues of neighbouring cities. The best estimates are that the port of Melbourne would be contributing approximately 10 per cent of Melbourne's overall air pollution, and of that 10 per cent contribution, a third of that contribution coming out of the port is short-haul trucks. They are contributing to at least a third of the pollution coming out of the port of Melbourne. Along with the trucks, the idling ships in port that are using dirty diesel fuels are impacting on our health, and they are causing countless premature deaths and other respiratory ailments.

We believe this once-in-a-generation opportunity exists to green Melbourne's port. The sale of the port lease must be contingent on this. The government and port management have clearly not been able to make this happen to date, but this sale opportunity can. We believe that the sale of this lease must have set targets for freight on rail. We believe that it must also commit to clean fuel for ships docking in Melbourne. We believe there must be implementation of a clean truck program to reduce localised pollution, and we believe that a portion of the sale income must be used to fund these green initiatives. I am going to try changing that slide.

What I want to tell you a bit more about is the port of Long Beach and what they have achieved with their clean truck program. The port of Long Beach is a port similar to the port of Melbourne. It has got neighbouring residential communities around it. It is in Los Angeles. It is a similar port in terms of ours, because so much of their freight is moved by short-haul trucks. They have had an amazingly successful program there. The port of Long Beach realised that doing nothing about pollution was not an option for them. Unless they took social responsibility to allow them to be seen as a good neighbour in terms of getting approval for further expansion of the port, that was never going to happen. They realised that to keep operating in that community and for them to be socially responsible went hand in hand. What they did with this clean truck program, in just a three-year period, was reduce truck pollution by 90 per cent. That is in a three-year period.

What they did was they introduced a temporary \$35 levy on full 20-foot container movements. If you wanted to move a container out of that port, there was a \$35 levy on that. That was paid by the cargo owners. It was not paid by the freight companies, it was not paid by the individual truck drivers; it was paid by the cargo owners. There were exemptions for containers going on rail and also for operators using clean trucks.

They used those funds over the three-year period to phase out the dirty trucks. It is the same clapped-out old trucks that we have doing container runs backwards and forwards through our community, and in this three-year program they have got rid of those dirty trucks. They are now only using clean ones, and they have used the funds to help freight companies to buy newer fleets. They have helped smaller owner-operators to also be able to upgrade their fleet as well.

This is just one initiative that I wanted to point out that could be achieved. Unfortunately there has been nothing like that coming from the state government or coming for the port management over the years. We just need the will and the commitment to make this happen, and we believe the sale of the lease is this opportunity.

Having the port claim that existing freight routes are good enough is a bit of a joke. Unfortunately you would have had a clear indication from our presentation that what we put up with is Third World conditions really. The Port of Melbourne, in their 2014 annual report, had a list of their environmental achievements for 2014. Two of the things that they highlighted was the fact that they have office compost recycling and some of their staff participate in the Around the Bay bicycle race. They put those up as environmental initiatives. You have the port of Long Beach putting up their initiatives — ‘We’ve reduced truck pollution by 90 per cent, we’ve stopped ships idling in port, we’ve reduced speed limits to limit the amount of exhaust coming out of trucks coming into port’.

We believe that the lack of achievements here are just a joke in Melbourne, which is considered the world’s most livable city. I want to thank you for this opportunity. In terms of our presentation, in the information packs you have there is more information about health and air pollution impacts, information about where our community centres are placed and also a fact sheet on the port of Long Beach’s clean truck program and what they achieved. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Mr Wurt and Ms Wilson. The committee appreciates your written submission and apologises for the difficulties with the technology this morning. If we could receive your presentation, we can distribute it to the committee later. That would be helpful.

The committee has around 20 minutes for questions. I am interested that you have indicated the lease should be contingent upon targets being established around pollution reduction and heading down the path of greening the port, as you have termed it. Is that something that you would see — I will take a step back. Given we are in an environment where there is now a piece of legislation in Parliament, and it is the government’s desire to move quickly on that, do you see those conditions you are seeking as something that should be framed in the lease or are they something that you would expect to see or want to see reflected in legislation?

Mr WURT — To be honest as a community group with this truck issue, we do not care how the solutions happen. We are not experts in terms of how that should proceed. Our feeling is that if you look at the track record of government and the management of the port to date, it has been pathetic, really, in addressing this issue. Fifteen years later basically not one truck has been reduced on our streets, apart from a few bandaid curfews that have just forced the trucks onto other streets. So if making this a condition of the sale — putting it into the actual lease agreement — if that is going to get changed, then that is the best way of proceeding. If there is commitment from the government otherwise to make that happen, fantastic.

But we have had commitment after commitment. The Bracks government in 2001 set a date to get freight on rail — 30 per cent of movements — by 2010. 2010 came. When they set that target, we were at 10 per cent; when we got to 2010, we had slid back to 8 per cent like nothing happened. We went backwards. We are sick of talk really. We do not really care how it happens. If building it into the lease is a way to make it happen, then, yes, that is the best way of proceeding.

The CHAIR — One of the things that the committee has heard about is projected capacity of the port of Melbourne. It currently handles 2.5 million containers per annum. There are estimates it could handle up to 7.5 million or 8 million containers per annum, a trebling of the current volume. In the absence of the measures that you are seeking in this transaction, what would a trebling of the volume through the port mean for the Maribyrnong community?

Ms WILSON — We have already have some pretty severe health impacts in our community so they would escalate rapidly. I think we would have a pretty severe public health crisis on our hands, but also our roads would not cope with that. Even if infrastructure is built, such as the western distributor, we still have a huge

amount of diesel emissions emanating from the port of Melbourne. That will obviously only increase if there is no investment in freight on rail and no environmental initiatives to help clean up the port. That is obviously going to spell pretty bad news for our community, and health outcomes will continue to get worse.

Mr WURT — Particularly because, as Narelle pointed out earlier, we already have asthma rates at 30 per cent above the state average.

Ms WILSON — 50 per cent.

Mr WURT — Fifty per cent, sorry. We also have hospital admission rates for respiratory ailments for children aged 0 to 16 years which are the absolute highest in the state. We already have this health issue. I feel like it should not be us here saying, 'Do something about it'. I would love the health department to be here advocating on our behalf, but unfortunately they are not.

Ms WILSON — The study into asthma rates was done by the Department of Education and Training in 2009. Wembley Primary School, which is situated just off Francis Street in Yarraville, just this year did a survey and found the asthma rate was actually 20 per cent. So I think it is pretty clear that the problem is getting worse as the port grows and that will continue to happen.

Mr MULINO — Obviously a key part of your agenda is to promote rail options at the port. Do you support the fact that part of the proposed transaction is that bidders are going to be required to submit rail options and that that will be a part of the evaluation process?

Ms WILSON — I do not really know the answer to your question.

Mr MULINO — Have you had a chance to look at the DTF submission?

Mr WURT — Not in great depth, no; I have only just scanned it.

Mr MULINO — But would you support the concept that bidders would be required to submit rail options and that that should be part of the evaluation?

Mr WURT — Absolutely, but not just rail options, we want firm targets.

Mr MULINO — Right, but that is a positive?

Mr WURT — But certainly building that in is a great thing; yes, it is a positive.

Mr MULINO — Rail options are often quite capital intensive. Have you had a chance to look at the pricing order that is on the web?

Mr WURT — We are a residential community group. We are not Treasury; we do not really know what these things cost, to be perfectly honest.

Mr MULINO — But you would support a regulatory regime on the economic side that provided certainty going forward that could support that kind of capped lease?

Mr WURT — Definitely. In Long Beach — that example I was giving before — they realised that the actual dollar cost of doing nothing was extreme for the community. If you took into account the health impacts — what that meant — the cost of dealing with health issues around respiratory ailments, asthma, all those other things, also taking into account the lost productivity in terms of kids with asthma not turning up to school or the workplace, the cost to the community was estimated from those short-haul trucks to be somewhere between \$500 million and \$1.5 billion per year to the greater residential area of Los Angeles. So in terms of just that clean truck program, they were able to get the clean trucks put in place, pay for that and still be in front in terms of future projections about what the health costs would be of doing nothing.

Mr MULINO — Just a couple of questions on the environmental side, I would imagine you would support the full environmental regulatory powers staying with the state and none of them being transferred to the private sector operator?

Mr WURT — That is a good question. Part of the problem we have in terms of the regulatory limits we have at the moment is that they do not look at the particle limits. There are no regulations around 2.5 particles. They are the really small particles. It is not the black soot you see coming out of a smokestack on a truck; they are the ultrafine ones that you cannot see. We only have advisory federal limits on that. Even just complying to what the state regulations are we do not believe is enough, because we believe that part of the state regulations that we are operating under are not good enough anyway compared to what world's best practice is.

Mr MULINO — That is what I am getting at. You would not want to see any of those powers shifted to the new private operator; you would want to see all of those powers in government hands, retained where they are and strengthened if anything — retained where they are basically.

Ms WILSON — We think then that there needs to be government legislation to ensure that the new operator complies.

Mr MULINO — Yes, so you would support that aspect of the transaction structure.

Mr WURT — Absolutely, yes.

Mr MULINO — Just the last question, you have said that you are flexible in terms of whether regulatory approaches are in the lease or in the legislation or in existing environmental legislation; what you want to see is outcomes.

Mr WURT — Yes.

Ms WILSON — That is right.

Mr MULINO — We could get into a discussion around — you might make the argument that putting certain things in the lease is a bit restricting in that it then does not allow for changes in regulatory structure, and we have seen this in other areas where regulatory approaches, for example in relation to carbon abatement, have changed. We have had discussions about carbon taxes, cap and trade and all sorts of things. You could make the argument that it is better to have it in state hands in legislation dedicated to the holistic view of the environment as opposed to the lease, but what you are basically saying is you do not care where it is so long as you get the right outcome.

Mr WURT — Yes.

Ms WILSON — That is right. We want to make sure that future growth at the port does not come at a cost for the health of our community. How that happens — I guess we are not the experts.

Mr BARBER — You are aware now that the committee itself is struggling to get a clear view on whether the capacity of the port of Melbourne is to double or triple from this point onwards, but the proposition here is that the government will negotiate with the new port owner that new cap — or a cap at least. It might be that it doubles, it might be that it triples, but from that point onwards the government then could go and build a new port somewhere else without having to pay compensation.

Mr DRUM — Just for the overflow.

Mr BARBER — Yes, for the overflow, as Mr Drum says. Imagine if you will that the amount of freight coming in and out of this port triples, and you said that about 8 per cent of the current amount is going by train maybe. What kind of program could you imagine would allow the number of trucks in your street to go down while the total amount of freight movements actually triples?

Mr WURT — That would be an extensive program of freight on rail, I believe. That is the only way really of meeting that future capacity without putting that extra capacity onto our existing road system, and that is going to take a commitment to build things like the intermodal hubs that have been discussed for decades now I think it is. You need a proper comprehensive rail infrastructure program where you have got those intermodal hubs moving the freight out of the port there by rail and then finishing the last mile by trucks from those intermodal hubs to the distribution centres out in industrial areas like Laverton, Epping to the north and Dandenong to the south.

Mr BARBER — At the moment, because we have not sold the port, we have actually got a choice. The government could decide, ‘You know what? Enough’s enough. Even with the best rail system in the world and the best pollution controls in the world, this port located in this place — it’s just in the wrong place’. There are too many externalities. There is too much of the issues that you raise. They could, if they wanted, stop it now, make improvements to the freight system, but actually start building another port somewhere else. Once we sell that port and once they have agreed on this new number — the double or the triple cap — the government does not really have that choice unless it is prepared to pay an extraordinary amount of compensation — that is, to compensate the new private owner for every container movement that they take off to a different port.

Do you think it is a good thing that they sell the port, thereby in effect locking in the amount of freight movement that will have to come in and out through these streets, albeit we would like there to be vastly more going by train? Do you think it is a good thing to sell the port if you then lock in and take away really an option of capping the current size of the port?

Mr WURT — In terms of the community and community views, being locked into something that might have detrimental impacts on our community in the future — we certainly do not support that, but, as I said, at the moment we really do not have a clear position on whether we support privatisation or whether we support the continuation of the government to operate the port. The issue for us is to get those outcomes for our community that are going to be the best. Have you got anything else you want to add?

Ms WILSON — I think — —

Mr BARBER — One of the key issues of this bill is do we agree with a private operator the capacity to grow up to a certain amount in the future — double, triple or whatever. I do not know if the port of Long Beach is looking at tripling in size or is it just growing in normal size, thereby allowing them to sort of start making some kind of impact on the total pollution by cleaning up their existing trucks. Cleaning up the existing trucks probably is not going to reduce the total amount of pollution if the port is tripling in size on your front door.

Mr WURT — That is true.

Mr BARBER — Do you agree?

Mr WURT — Yes. I suppose the thing for us is if we look at what has been going on in the 15-year history of our campaign, if you look at what has been achieved with government management and the port of Melbourne authority running the port there, nothing much has really been achieved in addressing those issues. I suppose if you wanted to look at the existing track record, it is not good. Perhaps having a private operator, as other people have said to this committee, maybe that is going to bring in innovation, maybe that is how we do get this change, maybe that is how we green the port — by actually shaking things up. Whether that is the best approach, Greg, I do not know whether I am the best person to answer that. All I know is the existing structure and what has been going on is really quite pathetic in terms of the conditions that we put up with, with the port of Melbourne saying our residential streets are good freight routes. It is a joke. It is laughable.

When Rod Eddington was doing his east–west study, he came out and visited us. We stood on Francis Street. He had never seen a situation like that in a developed country anywhere, where a port would be sending its traffic down narrow residential streets past schools. It is not good — —

Mr BARBER — Leaving the Port of Melbourne guys out of it — I understand you do not like them, but it is going to be the same Treasury and department of transport who are going to be negotiating this deal in secret that will then become — they have set the bounds on what a private operator has to do. You do not particularly think that Treasury and the department of transport are going to be looking out for your interests during this secret negotiation, do you?

Mr WURT — Based on track record, probably not, no, and obviously we would support a process which is as transparent as possible and there is transparency on actually addressing the environmental impacts that the port has now, let alone into the future.

The CHAIR — Mr Purcell?

Mr PURCELL — Thank you, Chair. I do not have any questions.

Mr ONDARCHIE — You talked about track record. Given the government has changed position on its West Gate distributor now from a tunnel to a spaghetti junction over the top of your residence — —

Mr MULINO — No change on position.

Mr ONDARCHIE — It is a moving feast — —

Ms SHING — No, we are actually keeping our election promises, which is a first — —

Mr ONDARCHIE — It is a bit like the detail around this legislation: as we ask the questions, things change. Just getting back to a question you were asked earlier, would you like to see some of your concerns addressed in the form of legislation that goes through, or by way of an expression of interest or afterthought by the government?

Ms WILSON — I do not understand the process enough to completely answer your question. The western distributor has the potential to solve our problem, but we also have a lot of issues and conditions regarding filtration. Are truck bans going to be implemented? There are a lot of things that need to be guaranteed where we have no guarantees. But in terms — —

Mr ONDARCHIE — I guess the real question before us, and you can help with this too, Martin, is that we are being asked to vote on a bit of legislation as it currently stands. Are you looking for that legislation to address the issues before you?

Mr WURT — Yes, I believe it is the role of government legislation to protect the health of the community, and that is what I think legislation is for. Whether we have the right legislation is another question.

Mr ONDARCHIE — We should be best informed by this process; that is all I am saying.

Mr WURT — Yes.

Ms SHING — Thank you so much, Narelle and Martin, for your presentation and for persisting with the videos. I will look forward to having a copy to look at later if that is all right?

Mr WURT — Yes.

Ms SHING — Martin, you just made a comment that it is important for legislation to take account of community health and community safety, and that that is a priority. On that issue, and noting the rat runs and the way in which the large container trucks operate in pretty densely populated areas, if it does not go to the port of Melbourne — just basically in terms of the size and growth of a city as we start to really push out into peri-urban and outer suburban areas — then there will be knock-on effects elsewhere. What do you say to that in relation to what those effects might be on other communities?

Mr WURT — Sorry, do you mean in terms of the siting of an alternative port? I did not quite — —

Ms SHING — The siting, the environmental considerations that you have raised around the health concerns about planning, around the right to quiet and peaceful enjoyment of a community; the sorts of things that you have been looking at for the last 15 years. Given the growth that is anticipated and that has been widely reported for Melbourne and the greater Melbourne area as well as for regional Victoria and goods to market and increasing the capacity, that will necessarily need to go somewhere. What do you say in relation to the fact that those effects will be felt somewhere, even if it is not in your community?

Mr WURT — I suppose it is the role of government to try to minimise those impacts, and at the moment I do not think they have been doing a very good job of that.

In terms of where intermodal hubs go in, you cannot place an intermodal hub next to a housing community, for example. I have done a trip to the States and I have seen communities that are up in arms over their intermodal hubs. All those things need to be considered. If you are going to have trains taking the containers away from the port efficiently on rail, what is going to happen once those trucks are there? With any sort of future placement around intermodal hubs and everything, the health of the community and the impact on the community of where those things are located is paramount.

Ms SHING — So you mean the community irrespective of where it is, irrespective of which community in Victoria that it may impact upon?

Mr WURT — Absolutely.

Ms WILSON — It is really important that the same mistakes are not made again that were made in our community. I think it is really important that, for example, pre-1995 trucks are phased out. We know that they form 50 per cent of the trucks on our roads. They are highly impacting our community, but they are obviously impacting other communities as well. These hearings have heard over and over again that a huge investment in freight on rail is needed. Freight trains obviously are diesel as well, and that will impact on other communities, so it is important that they are newer trains, that they have the latest environmental standards.

Ms SHING — In relation to rail, we have heard a lot of evidence from witnesses before this committee — and that is shown throughout the transcript — that rail and rail logistics and rail freight intermodal connectivity is a really important issue. Are you aware that rail will in fact be part of the requirements for consideration of any bidder as part of the transaction for the proposed lease of the port of Melbourne?

Mr WURT — I am aware that that is in there, but I do not know whether that will mean that in the future they will be forced to do something. I have heard promises about rail and freight in the past. I just do not know whether having that as a consideration in the sale of the lease is going to mean in the future that is what we will actually get.

Ms SHING — In that regard I would like to draw your attention to an example where DP World has in fact entered into an agreement with SCT Logistics to provide on-dock rail, which basically means that 20 000 trucks, I think is the figure that has been reported, will be taken off the road as part of the development of DP World's ongoing presence at West Swanson Dock as it has recently entered into a further 50-year agreement. What is your position in relation to those sorts of initiatives to incentivise people to remain at the port of Melbourne and to really get the best out of the product there?

Mr WURT — I think any initiatives to get rail and freight are definitely welcomed by our community that is impacted by existing road freight. We definitely welcome that. We just want to make sure that other infrastructure projects that have been done, particularly like the western distributor, for example, are aware of those plans and that any connections to that road or where that road is situated also does not impact on any future plans for getting more freight onto rail.

Ms SHING — Finally, just a related question. What is your view on the government's proposal to remove 50 of the worst level crossings across Melbourne in the next eight years?

Ms WILSON — We do not really hold a view on that except I guess that it gets a bit frustrating for us in the west, who are highly impacted by the operations of the port, that the sale money is going to go to the east and other parts of Melbourne to improve things for them but do nothing for us. We just really want to stress that a portion of the sale proceeds must go to improving the community that is the most impacted by the port.

Mr DRUM — I imagine the best scenario for your community, and it is not just Maribyrnong, I imagine you also stick up for Seddon and you talk for Yarraville and you talk for Maidstone — —

Ms WILSON — They are all in the City of Maribyrnong.

Mr DRUM — Yes, so effectively the whole inner west is your — —

Ms WILSON — Yes.

Mr DRUM — We have heard evidence here that the port at some stage in the next 9 to 30 years, we do not know what capacity is ever going to be called true capacity, when we reach capacity we are going to need to build a second port somewhere. We have also heard a lot of evidence that suggests that in any city around the world for as long as we can remember when a second port is built ships do not stop at the new one and then go and drop off at the old one; they simply do not do that. Ultimately, do you think in the planning stages we should be looking at and setting in place the pathway and all of the staging process for a second port, whether it be out at Bay West, Werribee, Hastings or somewhere different. Do you think it is now time, along with Mr Barber's thoughts, that we start planning for a port in an area that is not surrounded by residents?

Mr WURT — I suppose that question is really outside the ambitions of our group in terms of what we want to achieve. We are looking at trucks on our residential streets right now. We are not a group that looks at future planning for ports. What we would say is, if there are going to be future ports needed — and it is certainly not our job to try to estimate that by any means — do not make the same mistakes as at the existing port we have got here where neighbouring communities are impacted by diesel emissions coming out of the port and the freight is moved by inefficient trucks.

Mr DRUM — If you understood the compensation clauses and understood the monopoly arrangement that is being entered into under this arrangement, we are looking at a decision to sell this lease that will effectively lock in operations at the port of Melbourne for the next 50 years plus a potential extension for a further 20 years. Do you want the port to be where it is now for the next 70 years, or do you think we need to be planning for it to be moved somewhere else within that time frame as a natural progression of any city anywhere in the world?

Mr WURT — In terms of the port staying where it is, if we had the cleanest, greenest, world's best practice port in the city of Maribyrnong, we would not have an issue with that, because every crane, every truck and everything else operating there would be electric. We would not have ships idling, putting diesel pollution out, and we would have the world's most efficient rail freight network, which would reduce the impacts on our community, which is why the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group exists.

Ms WILSON — If going into the future it is just business as usual, we would prefer the port to be moved to a non-residential area, but I realise that is not realistic.

Mr DRUM — So if you are going to have three times as many trucks going past your house, it is okay, provided that they are electric trucks?

Ms WILSON — No, because we do not have the road infrastructure to support the number of trucks we have got now, so that is not okay. Obviously we still need investment in infrastructure and freight on rail.

Ms TIERNEY — Thank you for being here, and thank you for your ongoing capacity and advocacy in relation to the environmental and health concerns that are facing your community. Just some questions about the port of Long Beach. I am not familiar with it. Is it like the port of Melbourne in any way? Is it a like-for-like situation?

Mr WURT — It does not have the same proximity to downtown, but it certainly has the same proximity to residential areas. It is quite unusual, because there are two ports side by side. You have the port of Long Beach and you have the port of Los Angeles. They are basically together. If you look at a map, it looks like the same facility.

Interestingly enough, the port of Long Beach operates on publicly owned land and it is also a publicly owned entity that operates the port. We have been hearing here that sale of the lease, privatisation, could lead to innovation. The example over there is that having a government-owned and government-run port, they are innovative. They are one of the most innovative ports around today. They have won the green port award, the international award given to the best initiatives for greening a port. They won that in 2015, so they have been able to achieve that by being publicly owned.

In terms of doing a direct comparison with Melbourne, I could not do that for you except to say that the Los Angeles lifestyle in terms of reliance on roads, in terms of having these spread out suburbs, is quite different. Obviously the scale of numbers that we are looking at in Los Angeles is very different to here, but in terms of how that port operates, how it was using dirty, old short-haul trucks to move their freight is very similar to Melbourne.

Ms WILSON — If I could just add, they have been doing a long-term health study of the community around that port. They have found that the lung capacity of the children has increased significantly since they have implemented these clean air programs. It just goes to show that this is not a problem that is too big to tackle. It just needs the political will to take it on.

Ms TIERNEY — Have community representatives from your community actually gone there, and is there a community group that works on these sorts of issues around the port of Long Beach?

Mr WURT — Definitely, definitely. I went and spoke at an international conference in Los Angeles on the impacts of the port of Melbourne on neighbouring communities here. There is a range of local environment groups that are campaigning against the impacts of the ports over there, including residential groups opposed to intermodal hubs as well. They are very active over there compared to us.

Ms WILSON — The difference over there also is that the port, the government and the community all work together to achieve outcomes.

Mr WURT — Along with the trucking unions as well, who are all on board with this clean truck program.

Ms TIERNEY — That was going to be my next question.

Mr WURT — That is what was remarkable about that program. They actually realised that the people getting exposed to the highest levels of diesel pollution were the truck drivers and the workers at the port. Once they were educated on that, once they had brought the unions on board and brought in the clean truck program, everybody was welcoming it. It meant there was financial compensation for the owner-operator truck drivers to either upgrade the filtration on their existing trucks or replace them with new ones. They were able to work with all the stakeholders. It was remarkable. That is really quite different to how we operate here. There is not much capacity at the moment or there are not many examples of the different stakeholders working together for good environmental outcomes at the port of Melbourne.

Ms TIERNEY — But your community group will do whatever it can to make sure that all the stakeholders work closely together, I assume, to bring about real outcomes for your community?

Mr WURT — Definitely, as much as we can. We have been advocating on behalf of the community for 10 years. MTAG will celebrate its 10th anniversary in November this year, which is quite remarkable for an unfunded little community group.

Ms WILSON — And, yes, we are happy to work with anyone to achieve outcomes.

Ms TIERNEY — Great, thank you.

The CHAIR — Ms Wilson and Mr Wurt, thank you very much for your evidence this morning and your submission on behalf of MTAG. The committee very much appreciates it, and again we apologise for the technology; but if you are able to provide your presentation, we will circulate it among the committee.

Mr WURT — Yes, okay. Thank you for your time.

Witnesses withdrew.