

Context in oil and gas fight

I congratulate Taranaki Daily News, and Radio NZ, for extensive coverage of the recent hearing on multinational oil company OMV's offshore mining discharge application under the EEZ-CS Act. As a submitter opposing the application, I wish to set the record straight as to comments in the article 'OMV tells EPA that many environmental claims are 'not legally relevant' in oil and gas hearing' (TDN online 5/9/18). The article paraphrased a comment by legal counsel for OMV James Winchester: "He said the statement from Dr Lyndon DeVantier, that he was not too concerned about the application should everything go to plan and no spillage occurs, was significant." In fact, in answer to a question from Mr. Greg Hill, chair of the EPA Decision Making Committee, I reiterated my serious concern. Mr. Hill asked: "Right, so following that logically through, therefore, in your view, probably any additional effect of this cumulatively is unacceptable is the argument that you're really putting forward?" My response: "Absolutely, yes". At the heart of the issue, as the TDN article title refers, is the fact that the hearing was focused on one small aspect of an extremely risky proposed exploratory drilling programme, most of which is 'non-notified', removed from public scrutiny. This erosion of democracy resulted from a rushed amendment to the EEZ-CS Act under the previous government. Remarkably, it happened just three years following the Deepwater Horizon exploratory drilling catastrophe that killed 11 men and caused massive, generational, environmental impact.

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