

## Bastion Point review request



Monday, 11 July 2011



East Gippsland Shire Council will write to the appropriate State Government Ministers, requesting details of the current review process into the long-running and controversial Bastion Point safe ocean access saga.

After considerable debate and an earlier unsuccessful motion from Cr Mendy Urie, council decided at its monthly meeting last Tuesday night:

That council writes to appropriate State Government Ministers with regards to the Bastion Point boat ramp:

1. Requesting details of the current review process and the results of any peer review assessments associated with the project, as a matter of urgency; and
2. Provides a copy of updated economic analysis information provided by Buchan Consulting.

Re-igniting the debate within council, Cr Urie had given a notice of motion:

That council:

1. Immediately writes to the relevant State Government Ministers acknowledging the current review process being undertaken to identify the State Government's preferred option for an Ocean Access Boat Ramp at Mallacoota and requests no further action be taken in its assessment of Option 3B for Coastal Management Act Consent while the review is in progress.
2. Commissions and funds new economic studies for Option 3B before deciding whether to proceed with construction of that option.

Cr Urie's motion only received the support of Cr Gamble.

In her opening statements in supporting her notice of motion, Cr Urie said that the commissioned report by Buchan Consulting was confined by a lack of data and was based on a large amount of economic assumptions. She was raising the issue as one of "good governance".

Cr Urie said new economic studies should be commissioned before deciding to proceed with any construction at Bastion Point, due to the misleading information provided in Buchan Consulting's economic report.

"Not only did the Buchan Report have severe mistakes, but the revised report was inadequate for council to rely on in making its decision," Cr Urie said.

"Council has now found that the economic findings were inadequate and inaccurate. Council should go back and reconsider its decision when it has accurate economic statistics in hand.

"My motion suggests that we write to the State Government Ministers asking them to take the request for Coastal Management Act consent off the table."

Cr Bill Gamble agreed that information gained from the Buchan Report was inadequate and that new information was needed before making a decision on the matter.

"The Buchan Report was inadequate and had many false and misleading assumptions. The Buchan consultants themselves also admitted the failings of this report, the incorrect assumptions and statements, the errors causing significant reductions in the benefit cost-ratio," he said.

"A decision was made on incorrect and misleading information. We must make decisions on correct and well-researched information and if we subsequently find that information that we rely on was incorrect we are duty-bound to revise this information.

"This poor and inaccurate report, accepted by all involved, may now involve the ratepayers of East Gippsland in an uneconomic and fiscally irresponsible project."

Cr Jane Rowe accused Cr Urie's preamble to the point of plagiarism, claiming that it had been taken straight from the lobby group's website and that at no such time should ratepayers be expected to cover the costs of new economic research.

"In reference to the rest of the preamble, I would caution my fellow councillors to not be misled by a piece of work that is attempting to masquerade as an informative, factual representation of the current situation, when what it really is, is an attempt

by Cr Urie to pass off plagiarised, unsubstantiated claims as a basis for good decision making,” Cr Rowe said.

“If Cr Urie believes this to be a very serious matter, then I can only suggest she should be treating it seriously and not asking us to acknowledge a process we know nothing about. Then, on the one hand stop a process and on the other, do a study for it.

“It’s quite senseless and completely unnecessary.”

Cr Peter Neal said that all decisions had been finalised by the council in relation to the Bastion Point boat ramp and until the State Government came up with money for the planned works then nothing further should be done.

“The latest Coalition Government has said it wants to investigate the situation again and until that happens and it lets council know its findings, we can’t do any more.”

Mayor, Cr Dick Ellis declared a conflict of interest (he is a Gippsland Ports board member), while Cr Michael Freshwater was on leave.

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