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CAIM

\$6.2m for Bastion Pt

A new ocean access boat ramp will be developed at Bastion Point, subject to required planning and environmental approvals, thanks to \$6.2 million in State Government funding.

Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas announced \$6.2 million for the boat ramp and said the contemporary new facility would improve the safety of swimmers and beach users by separating them from where boats are launched.

"The ocean access boat ramp at Bastion Point will provide important infrastructure required for safer launching into deep waters for commercial fishing and recreational boaters.

"This will be a great boost for the region and encourage more visitors and boat users to the area, boosting local tourism and the economy.

"Boat access to the ocean is vital for Mallacoota due to the region's emerging marine tourism industry, the existing commercial fishing industry and increasing recreational boating demands."

Mr Pallas said the East Gippsland Shire as the proponent of the project would provide on-site supervision, with Major Projects Victoria directed to act as the project manager.

East Gippsland Shire Council will contribute \$300,000 for a car parking upgrade.

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Mallacoota ocean access funding welcomed

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The funding is subject to multiple statutory approvals, including cultural heritage consents and approval under the Coastal Management Act.

"We understand the project is required to achieve extensive approvals, which consider its expected benefits and impacts, as well as provide reassurance that it's being planned and delivered in an environmentally sensitive way," Mr Pallas said.

officer Steve Kozlowski said the announcement meant that the project would be fully funded from external sources, if it went ahead.

"This is very reassuring should it receive final ministerial approval," he said.

In welcoming the funding commitment Gippsland East Independent MP Craig Ingram urged the Government to also commit to finalising planning and environmental approvals so that construction can commence without any further delay.

"This project has been discussed for over 20 years and its progress has been constantly stalled," Mr Ingram said.

"For decades, Mallacoota has been held to ransom by a vocal minority against sensible and sustainable development at Bastion Point.

"Safe, reliable ocean access is incredibly important for the future of Mallacoota and East Gippsland and this has been identified for many years as one of the region's top priority

tourism and economic development infrastructure projects."

However, the announcement has been condemned by the Save Bastion Point Campaign, which claims Labor has put the cart before the horse.

Save Bastion Point spokesman Leo Op den Brouw said the Minister's announcement was just another blunder in a deeply flawed process that has failed to even pay lip service to appropriate environmental planning and cultural

heritage policies and laws.

"This development has a little local support. Nor did it get support from the independent

panel," Mr Op den Brouw said.

"There is a better, cheaper and sustainable solution for safer ocean access at Bastion Point.

That's what the Labor Government should be supporting and funding rather than the devastating development that it has announced."