

There is hope

Sir.- Beyond all issues, proper process in government is most important.

Contributing to the swing against Craig Ingram was his biased determination for massive infrastructure at Mallacoota capable of servicing aquaculture. (His Parliamentary Disclosure included aquaculture business.) The issue affects ratepayers.

East Gippsland Shire Council was influenced to be the proponent of the most intrusive proposal and councillors "went along". Then because there were flaws in their preferred option, council employed lawyers, barristers and consultant experts.

Cost to ratepayers? The Palmers Road debacle cost around \$1 million, but that was short compared with defence for the biggest ramp option - over several financial years! There was no requirement for legal defence - a sound proposal could simply have been open to public scrutiny and the Minister's expert panel.

The saga continued. After hundreds of written submissions, then months of intensive hearings from community groups, DSE, experienced fishermen, marine and port experts, and council's lawyers, the expert panel published recommendations: upgrade at the existing site.

Findings: Council's proposal did not have coastal policy support; would have negative social, environmental and economic impacts; and would require increased ocean rescue and enforcement activities.

Excerpts: "the panel finds that it is likely that the proposals will have an adverse effect on the marketability of the Wilderness Coast". "The proposals are likely to have a negative net present value and a benefit cost ratio below 0.3.

A one per cent decrease in current visitors would wipe out any gains that are likely to be gained through increased ocean access."

Significant to shire litigation risk was the published statement "Overall the

Panel believes the risk of catastrophic accidents in the open ocean would be significantly increased if Option 3 was implemented ...the Panel believes that Option 3 introduces an unacceptable risk."

Then unbelievably, Minister Madden overturned the findings of his experts. Because it defied logic, there was conjecture that this was a political deal.

Where was responsibility for human life; for Naturally Magic environment; for rate increases for car parks, boat cleaning against introduction of abalone virus, sand dredging (major costs unknown), supervision, maintenance, and multi-million dollar litigation against a proponent knowingly encouraging amateurs into "unacceptable risk"?

Last week Craig derided election candidates advocating a proper review. But whoever comes to power will now consider the less expensive and safer alternative at Bastion Point - for overall good rather than commercial self-interest.

Yours etc.,
Linette Treasure,
Buchan.

Bastion Point

Sir.- I understand that before election to office, Ingram was an abalone fisho holding a license, which, owing to the Australian genius for fisheries mismanagement, was worth about \$4 million (yes, that's right!).

Perhaps he would like to declare any interest in Bastion Point either directly, indirectly, or in principal.

Yours etc.,
M. Mitchell,
Lindenow.