

Candidates leave door ajar

Friday, 19 November 2010



Bairnsdale
Advertiser

Gippsland East Coalition candidates have left the door ajar on the Bastion Point 'Option 3B' ocean access debate.

The State Labor Government only weeks ago announced \$6.2 million in funding for the construction of the controversial Option 3B, supported by East Gippsland Shire Council, ahead of the design receiving approval by the Environment Minister.

Craig Ingram

However, the Coalition candidates at Tuesday night's 'Meet the Candidates' public forum in Bairnsdale stopped well short of also committing to the project.

Liberal candidate Sonia Buckley said if elected on November 27, she would "not be supporting the 3B proposal".

Prior to dismissing Option 3B, Ms Buckley said the "official line is that we will review what has taken place" on forming government.

The Nationals candidate Tim Bull said, having recently toured Mallacoota during his campaign, there were "question marks on both sides" of the issue.

"On forming government we would have a very good look at it," Mr Bull said.

Even Labor candidate Gregg Cook wasn't in total support of Option 3B despite his party's funding commitment.

Mr Cook said that while the existing facility needed to be improved, he had been told that a sea wall wasn't necessary.

"I'm for the compromised position," Mr Cook said.

Independent Craig Ingram reiterated his long-held stance, saying "it's just a boat ramp and should have been built a long time ago".

And the Liberal candidate's response to that comment: "Just a boat ramp, hmm...it's a bit more than a

boat ramp and that should be respected.”

Ms Buckley said that not only should the environment be protected, but that she had never heard of a previous government approving a “road along a beach”.

The public forum was attended by 100 local residents and four of the six Gippsland East candidates - Jill Redwood (Australian Greens) and Deborah Meester (Country Alliance) did not attend.

The issues covered by the candidates and the public were wide-ranging and touched on health and the visiting specialists issue at Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, getting real ‘on the ground’ action from government, marine national parks, coastal inundation, alpine grazing, water security and securing resource for the timber industry.

On the topical marine national parks, the candidates were asked who was in favour of expanding the marine parks system.

“I will alleviate your fear – we will not create or extend marine parks. Labor can’t even manage what they have,” Ms Buckley said.

Mr Ingram said he led the debate and that the Coalition had put it back on the agenda.

“We’ve reignited the debate and if this is allowed to go on we’re going to have to fight,” he said.

Mr Bull said there would be “no more marine parks”.

“Our stance hasn’t changed all the way through.”

One questioner asked the four candidates one single issue they would like to address if elected.

Mr Ingram said the most pressing issue was planning in regard to coastal inundation and the long-term economic problems that could create.

Ms Buckley said hers was returning mountain cattle to the High Country “where they belong”.

Mr Cook’s was “keeping Gippsland East as a great place to live, work and have a family”.

Mr Bull was being judged on how the state looked after its people – the aged, sick and those with special needs. “We’re doing a terrible job.”

[Close Window](#)