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• A white elephant dominated protests at Mallacoota's Bastion Point on Easter Sunday as about 350 people gathered to reject an ocean access boat ramp about to go to tender through East Gippsland Shire Council. Photograph by Michael Groom.

## Bastion Point: "Dumbo" protest staged

By Sarah Chenhall

A white elephant dominated Mallacoota's Bastion Point on Easter Sunday as parts of a divided community protested against an approved ocean access boat ramp and breakwater.

About 350 people, including many members of the Save Bastion Point (SBP) group, gathered on the beach to demonstrate solidarity against the project, which they believe is oversized, uneconomical and destructive.

Their protest comes as East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC) prepares to call for tenders for the 20-year project this month.

Now known as Option 3b, the project was granted conditional approval by the Victorian Government in January to be constructed between February 2013 and March 2016.

If SBP's efforts are fruitless, the existing basic boat ramp will be replaced by a two lane boat ramp and jetty, breakwater, with an access road, public amenities and car park.

"The beach belongs to us all," said community organiser Melinda Beecham.

"In recent public consultation, the vast majority of the community rejected Option 3b.

"We want the East Gippsland Shire

Council to work with our community, not against it.

"We ask it to reconsider its decision, and build instead a lower impact upgrade at the existing site."

However EGSC says downsizing the project will mean it fails to meet relevant guidelines and useability.

In announcing approval in January, Shire Chief Executive Officer, Steve Kozlowski said community consultation had lasted for "decades".

"The new boat ramp and breakwater will dramatically improve safety for the launching of commercial and recreational vessels and vehicle parking facilities, and provide a much-needed separation for swimmers and surfers in that location," he said.

Abalone diver and charter boat operator Jason York of Mallacoota Fishing Charters and Tours said safer ocean access facilities were needed at Mallacoota.

"I'm supportive of having safer facilities but I think it's bigger than is what is needed," Mr York said.

"Originally it was going to be an upgrade but it's ended up huge because they can't put a new ramp in without all these new regulations.

"But it's Bastion Point or nowhere."

Find out more at [www.east-gippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.east-gippsland.vic.gov.au) and [www.save-bastionpoint.org](http://www.save-bastionpoint.org)