

## User to pay ultimate cost?

Sir,- Launch fees of about \$75 would be required for Mallacoota's proposed Bastion Point ocean access facility if a user-pays system operated.

This figure is derived from annual cost figures presented by East Gippsland Shire Council to the inquiry panel, recreational usage numbers determined by the panel, and commercial usage numbers provided by the Department of Primary Industries.

At the inquiry hearings, council was recommending no user-pays fee, but instead that ratepayers and government pay the full operating costs for commercial and recreational users of the facility.

Recently council's director development Chris Waites put the user-pays principle back on the table, when he stated in correspondence: "The 'user pays' issue will need to be considered as an operational matter should the project be ultimately constructed."

A user-pays fee will have a huge bearing on the viability of the facility. This issue should be an integral part of the economic statement that is to be provided to council prior to its decision on whether to proceed further with this project.

The inquiry panel found that this facility is likely to become a burden for the community to support, so council must explain why East Gippsland ratepayers and Victorian taxpayers should be fully funding

the ongoing costs of commercial and recreational users of this facility.

Yours etc.,  
James Thyer,  
Melbourne (also an East Gippsland ratepayer and frequent Mallacoota visitor).

## A natural decision

Sir,- The 'Inspired by Gippsland' postcard series contains magnificent pictorials of "remarkable rock formations and secluded unspoilt beaches, native bushland offering sanctuary to wildlife and visitors alike, winding tracks and beach walks boasting breathtaking vistas at every turn - the naturally magic East Gippsland coast awaits you".

This has now been emphasised by the Federal Minister for Tourism Martin Ferguson, who stated in August, 2009:

"I am passionately enthused by the natural beauty of Australia. I do believe the landscapes that surround us are unparalleled in their beauty. In the fiercely competitive world of tourism they present us with enormous opportunity and point of difference. Who would not want to visit those national landscapes already launched ... I am pleased today to add the Australia's Coastal Wilderness to the list of only eight regions included in the National Landscapes Program. To qualify as a national landscape the location must be a world-class landscape of natural, cultural and spiritual assets, distinctive to Australia. Australia's coastal wilderness has a significance which has long been internationally recognised. It is a site of more than national significance and includes Croajingolong National Park, which was in 1977 proclaimed a World Biosphere Region by UNESCO. The landscapes I am announcing today have been included in this unique program because they are more than just a group of appealing destinations. They are regions, which as a whole are much greater than just the sum of their parts. They are distinctively Australian natural and cultural environments. And they will appeal to Tourism Australia's target market, ex-

perience seekers; travellers of all ages who wish to experience new adventures and destinations which enable them to engage with a local culture."

This coastal wilderness of course includes the beautiful natural beaches adjoining Croajingolong National Park, being Bastion Point at Mallacoota.

It was therefore of interest to hear the chairman of our East Gippsland Economic Development Advisory Board in his submission to council that "... as an engineer I remain confident that with sensitive investigation, design and vision, the ocean access can be engineered in sympathy with the environmental, cultural and recreational values of Bastion Point and the adjacent coast, strengthening wilderness tourism opportunities."

Just to put this \$4 million development into perspective, for those not aware, this sensitive design will include: a large bitumen sealed car park immediately adjacent to the beach of supermarket proportions; a 150-metre long and 20-metre wide access road out to Bastion Point built over pristine rock pools and beach; a 150-metre long and 20-metre wide rock breakwater built out into the ocean over the rock pools and reef; then blasting out 16 million-year-old rock to allow the construction of a large boat ramp, wide and long enough to accept 30-foot-long commercial and recreational fishing boats to launch in all weather 90 per cent of the time.

As the Minister stated "... These are distinctively Australian natural and cultural environments".

Victorian Environment Minister Gavin Jennings will soon have to make the decision as to whether this development, sanctioned by the East Gippsland Council, will be in keeping with the Australian Coastal Wilderness National Landscapes status-part of the World Biosphere Region acclaimed by UNESCO.

One would think that would be an easy decision in this United Nations International Year of Biodiversity.

Yours etc.,  
Bill Gamble,  
Forge Creek.

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