

Your taxes

Sir,- Escalating and compounding council rates are a major burden.

I believe the system of local government is out of control with the majority of councillors inept or lacking intestinal fortitude. From the report of council meeting (November 11), it appears most do not read or are incapable of analysing major reports, simply going by impressions, or what is fed to them by staff or political interests.

The responsible attempt by councillors Urie, Gamble and Ellis to have council reconsider a report with a \$2.8 million anomaly was blocked by Crs Freshwater, Anderson, Neal, Buckley and Pelz.

More disturbing was the attempt by Crs Freshwater, Pelz and Neal to block the notice of motion even being discussed. Open and informed debate is essential to democracy.

The proposal for massive infrastructure at Bastion Point continues to be shoved through despite a cheaper and safer boat ramp alternative. Proper consideration is not being given to catastrophic risk,

costs of maintenance and environmental destruction.

Although blocking proper analysis, councillors seemed unclear as to why it should be built (if the rationale for the massive infrastructure was based on faulty cost benefit.)

Responses indicate this:

Cr Neal: "Because I am guilty and I haven't read the Buchan Report, I just wonder where in the Buchan Report these anomalies are...." (Did he vote for proper clarification? No.)

Cr Freshwater: "This has been brought up before and I was of the impression at the end of the day the Buchan Report balances out." (What impression?)

Cr Pelz: "We weren't requested to assess the report, rather receive it and hand it on to the Minister." (Council commissioned the report so surely should be responsible for checking its accuracy!)

"I find this quite insulting that it has been brought back up. We've received the report and handed it on. We've made the right assessment." (We have been the rubber stamp.)

Cr Neal: "Economists are unregulated, not responsible and not accountable."

(Which economists - the shire's or the consultants engaged?)

Cr Anderson said she "was disappointed and upset" with the error and the lack of action to fix it. (But then she voted not to have the report reappraised!)

Cr Buckley said the eco-

nomical benefits were irrelevant to the argument "We can only assume the benefits. If it's as good as I think it is, and I've been told it is, the benefits are irrelevant."

(A \$6 million project - for what benefit? Oh well, it's just public money after all.)

Unfortunately this is not an excerpt from 'The Mad Hatters' Tea Party' but 'your taxes at work'. Once taxpayers have footed construction costs and ratepayers ancillaries, the ongoing maintenance and safety issues of this grandiose folly will ensure escalating rates for East Gippslanders.

Yours etc.,
Linette Treasure,
Buchan.

Letters to the Editor

Bairnsdale Advertiser

19 Nov 2010

Economic benefit overstated

Sir,- We note that the economic benefit of the proposed Option 3B Bastion Point breakwater have again been significantly overstated by council's advisors, (*Advertiser*, November 12), this time by \$2.8 million each year.

We are extremely concerned that the ratepayers of East Gippsland have been and continue to be misled about the real and ongoing cost to them of the council's proposal. At the same time, the potential benefits to Mallacoota and its economy have been consistently overstated to justify the proposal - one that the majority of the local community does not want.

Sure, the council has applied for State Government funds to construct the breakwater. However, the real cost - year in, year out - will fall on East Gippsland ratepayers for a facility that from the outset has no viable economic base, and little chance of achieving one on the evidence that has been put forward to date.

Among the inaccuracies and concerns about the economics of this project are:

* The assumption that recreational launches at Bastion Point will in-

crease seven-fold on current numbers. There is no explanation of the logic of this, or how it will be achieved.

* The ludicrous assumption, as noted in last week's *Advertiser*, that each group of three visitors to Mallacoota will spend over \$4,240 for three days' stay - even if they are camping.

* The fact that the council has not identified, or allowed for, the additional marketing costs involved. Given the competition from established, well-known fishing destinations nearby in Victoria and NSW, marketing costs will be considerable.

From first-hand experience, dealing with hundreds of guests each year, we believe that Mallacoota's future lies in low-impact, sustainable, high yield tourism, and that Mallacoota will be best served by a low-impact upgrade of the existing facility, at minimal cost to East Gippsland ratepayers.

Yours etc.,
Rosemary Luker and
Russell Freeman,
Karbeethong Lodge,
Mallacoota.