

The last bastion!

Jenny Mason of the Save Bastion Point Campaign updates us on the battle to stop inappropriate development at this Mallacoota beach.



Bastion Point beach must remain an unspoiled gem of the Wilderness Coast.

PHOTO: DAVID HUXTABLE

THE BATTLE over Mallacoota's Bastion Point that has raged for years is now reaching its climax. The next few months will be critical to the outcome.

Will Bastion Point remain an unspoiled gem on Victoria's Wilderness Coast, or will it be covered in rock, rubble and cement? Will democracy and justice prevail or will the Point become the casualty of a political football game?

And will the principles endorsed in the Victorian Coastal Strategy be upheld, or will the State Government be allowed to ride roughshod over its own processes and guidelines?

Bastion Point in Mallacoota is an iconic beach on Victoria's Wilderness Coast. Near both Croajingolong National Park and Cape Howe Marine National Park, it is recognised for its outstanding scenic beauty and diverse coastal values.

It is here that the East Gippsland Shire Council plans to smash away more than 3000 cubic metres of intertidal reef to create a boating channel, construct a 130m long breakwater on the reef and through a surf break, instal a dredge to relocate the continual accumulation of sand, construct a substantial access road with rock revetments on and along more than 100m of beach, and remove a significant amount of coastal vegetation to build a large carpark.

Community opposition to this destructive proposal is enormous, particularly since low-key improvements of the current boat facility are possible, and are all that is required.

After a lengthy Environment Effects Assessment process, an independent Panel of

Inquiry clearly recommended against the Council's proposal, and instead recommended a low-key upgrade, without breakwaters, at the existing site.

But Minister for Planning Justin Madden strangely ignored the Panel's findings and recommendations, and gave the Council's proposal his support.

Local group Friends of Mallacoota is challenging this action in the Supreme Court, through Judicial Review, on the grounds that Minister Madden did not assess the environment effects as he is required to do under the Environment Effects Act, and that Friends of Mallacoota has been denied natural justice.

The case will be heard in the Supreme Court in Melbourne on 16-17 March.

Meanwhile, East Gippsland Shire Council is steamrolling ahead with the final design phase. But before construction can actually begin, Minister for Environment Gavin Jennings must give consent under the Coastal Management Act. This consent has yet to be obtained.

The VNPA is supporting the 'Save Bastion Point' campaign to prevent this outrageous development from proceeding.

You can help by signing the enclosed postcard, and lobbying your local MPs to stop this act of environmental vandalism.

For further information and actions see www.savebastionpoint.org