

Save Bastion Point

protect this coastal environment from inappropriate development

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 15 November 2010

Bastion Point Funding Fails The Tests

A fiery meeting in East Gippsland Shire Council on 9 November has exposed how fast-tracking of funding for the Bastion Point harbour development has papered over glaring errors in consultant reports and failed official funding tests.

Minister for Roads and Ports, Tim Pallas, announced \$6.2 million project funding before environmental approval had been given by Minister Jennings and cultural heritage approval by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

The Council debate also revealed that despite Council being alerted to an annual \$2.8 million calculation mistake in the economic benefit analysis of the development by Buchan Consulting, it appears Council staff had not informed the Minister of the error – which over the 20 year period the study examined, would amount to a \$56 million overstatement of the gross benefits of the project.

On the same day that Council officers were made aware of the error, Council applied for funding to Regional Development Victoria (RDV) without correcting the mistake. Twelve business days later, Minister Pallas approved the funding.

We do not believe that Council's Bastion Point harbour project meets any of the RDV funding criteria. These include demonstrated socio-economic and environmental benefits, policy support, legal approvals and community support. The Independent Panel found that:

- the economic case for this project was poor and it was likely to be to the overall net detriment of tourism and become a financial burden
- it would cause significant adverse social impact, and noted 87 % community opposition in submissions to the Inquiry
- it would adversely affect the natural values of Bastion Point
- there was little policy support. Environmental approval has yet to be given by Minister Jennings as required under the Coastal Management Act and Cultural Heritage approval has not yet been given by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

This election provides all political parties with the opportunity to commit to restoring due process so the community can reach a Win-Win solution, not the impending debacle that is Council's Bastion Point harbour development.

Contact details for interviews –

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Link to Bairnsdale Advertiser report of 9 August 2010 Council meeting:

<http://savebastionpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/Bairnsdale-Advertiser-12-Nov-2010.pdf>

Link to \$2.8 million Black Hole controversy: <http://savebastionpoint.org/2010/10/10/annual-2-8-million-black-hole-found-in-council-economic-study/>

Link to SBPC website: <http://savebastionpoint.org/>

Link to Independent Panel Executive Summary:

http://savebastionpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Exec_Summary_Panel_Report_2008.pdf