

Save Bastion Point

protect this coastal environment from inappropriate development

MEDIA RELEASE

21 August 2013



Making a point: some of the Mallacoota ratepayers who are taking part in the Rates strike

Ratepayers strike in East Gippsland- “We’ve had enough!”

Rate notices have duly gone out to Victorian ratepayers- but this year some are refusing to pay. In far East Gippsland, ratepayers angered by their Council’s decision to go ahead with the controversial Option 3b breakwater development at Bastion Point, Mallacoota, are going on strike.

“Withholding our rates is a tangible way for us to express our lack of confidence in the East Gippsland Shire Council and its ability to manage our funds” said Jenny Mason, spokesperson for Save Bastion Point Campaign.”

“To have proceeded with this over-sized, destructive development and committed East Gippsland ratepayers to the maintenance and operational costs shows gross financial irresponsibility” said Ms Mason.

“A strong business case has never been made” she continued “On the contrary, the EES Inquiry found Option 3b had a very weak economic case, and the subsequent economic analysis upon which the Council relied was found to contain major errors.”

This long running battle has included an EES Inquiry and a Government Review. Both the Inquiry and the Review advised against the construction of Option 3b, each recommending alternative, lower impact designs.

“It is possible to significantly improve boating infrastructure at Bastion Point with a less costly and less damaging design, but this Council has failed to listen to expert advice or to the broader community. All the letters, submissions and presentations we have made are like water off a duck’s back: Council’s total disregard for community input makes a mockery of the term “consultation”, said Ms Mason

A NSW firm, GPM Constructions, has recently been awarded the contract for the construction phase at a cost of \$5 million. This is scheduled to begin sometime in September.

“It is hard to believe \$5million will be sufficient” said Ms Mason. “Construction costs are certain to blow out. Moreover, the operational and maintenance costs, estimated at \$270,000 per annum by the Department of Transport, are to be met by ratepayers. With so many uncertainties, such as sand dredging requirements and impacts from severe storm events, who knows what the final bill will be.”

“Why should ratepayers pay for a facility that most will never use, that isn’t supported by the broader community, and which will permanently ruin an area that is currently enjoyed by so many?” Ms Mason questioned. “Indeed, the independent Panel that thoroughly examined the project feared not only would Option 3b become a financial burden on East Gippsland ratepayers, but the loss of landscape and wilderness values of Bastion Point would be to the overall net detriment to tourism” she concluded.

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