

Save Bastion Point

protect this coastal environment from inappropriate development

MEDIA RELEASE

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ABC Blows the Lid on Bastion Point

The controversial Bastion Point Option 3b boat ramp development has come under the lens, raising serious questions about the transparency of the process that has led to the project proceeding. ABC reporter Ashlynn McGhee demonstrated in a revealing report that lobbyists for the Option 3b development have direct connections with the multi-million dollar abalone industry at Mallacoota.

The presentation, which aired on the ABC's 7.30 Report last Friday night, uncovered the business linkage between Mr. John Rudge, principal lobbyist for the Option 3b breakwater and beach road proposal, and Mr. Don Healy, the businessman appointed to run the public consultation and project manage the Environmental Effects Statement conducted by East Gippsland Shire Council. Mr Rudge did not declare any financial or other connection with Mr Healy in a signed conflict of interest declaration, when he sat on the steering committee that appointed Mr Healy.

The 7.30 Report detailed the linkages between the men through the food export or abalone aquaculture companies they directed, or owned. An unnamed Liberal Party identity was also shown to have links with the same companies.

The Inquiry Panel appointed to examine the Environment Effects Statement (EES) raised concerns about Mr. Healy's impartiality.

"The 7.30 Report shows that public consultation on this project has been compromised by undisclosed conflict of interest" said Jenny Mason, spokesperson for Save Bastion Point Campaign. "This project has gone ahead despite the wishes of the majority of the community for a smaller, less environmentally damaging and more economic option."

The Inquiry Panel went on to recommend against Option 3b yet these recommendations were ignored by the then Planning Minister Justin Madden. Subsequently, Minister for the Environment, Ryan Smith, gave Coastal Management Act approval for the development despite a Review by his own Government recommending a more economic and less environmentally destructive alternative.

"That East Gippsland Shire Council is proceeding with this development, despite the wishes of the majority of the community, and despite the EES Inquiry Panel and the Government's Review Team recommending against it, is an indictment on the whole process." said Ms Mason.

"It is not too late to halt this unpopular project" said Ms Mason. "In the light of these revelations we call on East Gippsland Shire Council to reconsider its decision. Option 3b is an unnecessary over-development that is damaging to the environment and the community, and is likely to become a financial burden to ratepayers for years to come."

Mr Madden, Mr. Don Healey and Minister Ryan Smith all declined to comment to the 7.30 Report.

The 7.30 Report may be viewed at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-04/three-decade-battle-over-boat-ramp-edges-closer-to/5000324>

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