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Save Bastion Point

protect this coastal environment from inappropriate development

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Save Bastion Point Campaign Update No.16

16 December 2010

NEW VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT CAN NOW TURN TIDE ON BASTION POINT OVERDEVELOPMENT

STATUS OF OPTION 3B BEFORE ELECTIONS

On 9 August 2010 the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC) voted to accept the final Option 3b design, together with the Buchan Economic Report and the AMCS Safety Audit, and to apply for consent to construct under the *Coastal Management Act*, from the then Minister for Environment, Gavin Jennings.

The application was subsequently lodged in September /October. However supporting documentation was incomplete, and any decision making was put on hold.

Approval under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* is still outstanding, and Consent under the *Coastal Management Act* has not yet been given.

Campaign advertisement in the Gippsland News prior to the election

Days before the government went into caretaker mode, the then Minister for Ports, Tim Pallas, pre-empted the approvals process and promised \$6.2 million for the project should final approvals be given. Was this to shore up support from Independent Craig Ingram in case of a hung parliament? We suspect so.

ELECTION RESULTS AND THE CAMPAIGN

The new government heralds the start of another phase in our long battle to save Bastion Point. We are hopeful that the tide is now turning in our favour, but it is imperative we keep the pressure on.

During the election campaign, the profile of Bastion Point was raised considerably and it became an important issue in the region. Almost all candidates either spoke out strongly against Option 3b, or supported reviewing the project. Only Craig Ingram continued to support the development, criticising all other candidates for their lack of leadership on the issue. The debate over Bastion Point received great media coverage, and even made the front page lead story in the Bairnsdale Advertiser.

A massive swing of 21% saw Craig Ingram lose his seat to Tim Bull of the Nationals. Ingram has always been a strong advocate for the proposal. In contrast, Tim Bull appears receptive to "having a good hard look at the project".

In the lead up to the election the Coalition made a commitment to review the project under the required consent and approvals processes.

We must now not only hold them to this commitment but also convince them of the need for a thorough review of the project, and of the process that has occurred since the completion of the Panel Report. With a commitment to open, transparent and accountable government, and more responsible use of public money, the Coalition should be receptive to this. They should be reminded of these commitments made during the election campaign.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP? – see over.

PROJECT AN ECONOMIC DEBACLE

In June 2010 EGSC had commissioned Buchan Consultants to write the fourth economic report for the proposal. The report was released to the public just days before the 9 August Council meeting at which Councillors were to vote on whether to proceed with the project. Although Councillors had little time to analyse this economic report, EGSC accepted its findings at face value.

Along with a myriad of questionable economic methods and predictions, the report was later found to contain an annual \$2.8 million mistake.



Supporters outside Shire offices prior to 9 August Council meeting

After there had been much publicity of the errors, EGSC asked Buchan Consultants to review its report. However, the report containing the error had already been submitted to the Department of Transport as part of an application for funding. It was not until after Minister Pallas had announced \$6.2 million funding for the development, that Buchan Consultants admitted an error had been made, and released a revised report with the 'Benefit Cost Ratio' dropped by three quarters.

Economists at Large have found that this revised report is still questionable – particularly methods Buchan used to estimate demand. Indeed it has emerged from recent FOI material that Buchan have counted in existing tourism that already occurs at Bastion Point as a benefit of a new facility. How can such a flawed economic report continue to be used to justify this project?

NEW MAYOR ELECTED

On the 7 December, East Gippsland Shire Council elected Cr. Dick Ellis as the new Mayor. Cr. Ellis has always been most diligent in raising concerns regarding the project at Council meetings. We congratulate him on his election.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

It is critical that the new government is made aware of the strong opposition to this over-development, and of public concerns with the lack of due process that has

occurred. Let the Coalition know that you welcome their commitment to open and transparent government. Write letters, send emails, write messages on face-book and twitter pages to the following parliamentarians:

Write to:

The Hon. Ted Baillieu
Premier of Victoria
Level 1, 1 Treasury Place
Melbourne 3002
ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au

The Hon Ryan Smith
Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Level 17, 8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne 3002
ryan.smith@parliament.vic.gov.au

The Hon. Matthew Guy
Minister for Planning
1 Spring Street
Melbourne 3000
matthew.guy@parliament.vic.gov.au

Mr. Tim Bull MP
Member for East Gippsland
PO Box 1685
Bairnsdale 3875
gippsland.east.nationals@gmail.com

Suggestions on what to say:

- You welcome the Coalition's commitment to review the project, and trust it will be a thorough review.
- You have major concerns about the lack of transparency in the process to date. (eg Justin Madden rejecting the Panels recommendations, Tim Pallas promising funding before Approvals had been given etc.)
- You have major concerns about Option 3b. (Write about your own concerns with the proposal- safety, environmental, social, cultural, etc.)
- You would like to see the implementation of the independent Panel recommendations: rejection of 3b, and a community supported upgrade of the existing site
- You consider that spending \$6.2 million on a facility that is so problematic and not well supported is a waste of public money. Mention also the high ongoing costs of maintenance. An alternative concept which would have broad community support has been costed at only \$1.6 million.

Merchandise for sale

We have T-shirts and stickers for sale. Please see our website for details, or visit us over summer at the Mallacoota Markets.

Thank you!

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters: together we can Save Bastion Point!

We wish you all a happy and safe holiday season.