

Further support

Sir, - I write to support the issues raised by Linette Treasure in her 'call to account' letter (21/9).

I also attended the directions hearing for the Bastion Point Mallacoota Environment Effects Inquiry held in Mallacoota on Wednesday, September 13.

Like Ms Treasure, I was amazed to learn that the shire had engaged a legal team, although legal representation is not a requirement of the process.

Were councillors aware of this proposed expenditure, and has it been authorised by them?

Throughout the preparation of the Environment Effects Statement we have been told repeatedly that the majority of the community are in favour of the current option 3 proposal.

As can be clearly seen from scanning the submissions (482) received by the Planning Panels Victoria, over 80 per cent of residents' submissions are opposed to the options put forward, but would be supportive of a low impact upgrade, without break walls, at the current ramp site.

The money spent so far on the process and that which will be required to pay legal costs, would have seen Mallacoota well on the way to a resolution to the ocean access problem, and one which would have majority support in our community.

One would wonder why funding is so difficult to obtain for projects such as the Shared Pathways Projects which has full community support and would be a real bonus for both residents and visitors to our town.

Yours etc.,
June Drake,
Mallacoota.

Voicing concern

Sir, - I would like to congratulate Linette Treasure (*Advertiser* 21/9) for so articulately voicing the concerns of many residents of East Gippsland Shire.

Surely after the monstrous expense to ratepayers of the Palmer Road, Lakes Entrance property scandal (approximately \$900,000 in legal fees alone), the shire should be more cautious with blatantly spending public funds.

For example the more than \$400,000 already spent on an Environment Effects Statement for Bastion Point Ramp followed by the extravagance of a lawyer and barrister to attend the Minister for Planning's Panel Hearing, bearing in mind that over 80 per cent of the population is against the proposed plan.

As Linette asked "is the expenditure open ended?" and yes, "ratepayers are entitled to an explanation".

Yours etc.,
Jeannette Davey,
Mallacoota.

Dismay

Sir - As a ratepayer, I write to express my dismay that the EGSC has engaged costly legal services to support its proposal for a breakwater facility at Bastion Point, Mallacoota.

Council must be aware that an unheard of number of over 480 submissions were received in response to the call for public submissions to the Environment Effects Statement for this project.

Of these responses, around 87 per cent were opposed to the proposal,

and in the case of residents of Mallacoota, 82 percent disapproved.

I am outraged that council has chosen to use our rates to promote this proposal fully knowing that the overwhelming majority of respondents is very strongly opposed to a breakwater at Bastion Point.

Yours etc.,
Ethel Fairweather
Perry,
Mallacoota.

A travesty of democracy

Sir, - Linette Treasure, 'Call to Account', (21/9) is correct in querying the democratic merits of the East Gippsland Shire's support for the proposed industrial sized ocean access at Mallacoota.

From the outset of this process the Council's position has been questioned by residents.

Council accepted only two Mallacoota residents, both being members of the Mallacoota Ocean Access Committee (MOAC) to represent the residents of Mallacoota on the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) Steering Committee.

No Mallacoota resident who was opposed to the project was on the Steering Committee although the opponents are in the majority.

Most residents support a more modest and much cheaper upgrade of existing facilities.

Council staff said that MOAC was entitled to be represented on the Steering Committee because an anonymous donor promised \$30,000 to the cost of the inquiry.

Council staff have not confirmed if the \$30,000 has in fact been paid yet. Furthermore, why are Council staff intent on supporting an industrial sized project which to date has cost ratepayers thousands of dollars, which will cost many more thousands to erect

including the cost of building a new access road over sand dunes, as well as an annual upkeep cost of at least \$50,000 p.a., (this figure being Council's very modest estimate)?

Their support of this project must be questioned when the majority of ratepayers are opposed to this project and other more necessary public works are not being undertaken.

Yours etc.,
Joan Kimm,
Mallacoota.