

Save Bastion Point

Brief Critique of Supplementary Reports to the Bastion Point Ocean Access Environment Effects Statement

Between 2004 and 2006 the East Gippsland Shire Council commissioned six Reports to be undertaken by various consultants as background preparation for its proposed ocean access breakwater/ boat ramp development at Bastion Point as per its Environment Effects Statement.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign argues that a number of the Reports are seriously flawed and that the Council has selectively used information contained in the Reports to prepare a free summary brochure for distribution to the general public to justify its proposed development. The complete Reports are up to approximately 1000 pages and could be considered too expensive and inaccessible for the general public to obtain, review and comment on.

Coastal Processes Study

The EES and the Coastal Processes Study claim that it is feasible to build a breakwater/ boat ramp facility with 90% usability at all 3 locations that were investigated with minimal impacts on the coastal processes. Other options with 50% and 25% usability were not recommended as it was considered that they present serious safety issues for boat operators during launch and retrieval. The EES and Study both acknowledge that sand will accumulate in the access channel, however it is claimed that this can be effectively dealt with by installing permanent sand moving equipment.

Independent experts have criticised the methodology used in the Coastal Processes Study, and question the validity of the results, in particular, those related to sand volume and transport, and the adequacy of the sand moving equipment to deal with it.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign is critical of the proposed scale of the development recommended in the Coastal Processes Study, which is based on the requirements of a Regional Boat Ramp. The Save Bastion Point Campaign does not regard this level of development as necessary or appropriate for ocean access. Mallacoota can offer a Regional Boat Ramp facility that gives access to the lake system. This presents a much safer option for recreational boating.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Investigation

In the EES it is acknowledged that at the preferred option site for a breakwater/ boat ramp at Bastion Point, 2 sites of Aboriginal Cultural Significance will be impacted upon, and 1 site destroyed. It is argued in the EES that this is acceptable, and management measures are suggested. It is also recognised that further scientific investigations will be required, and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan will need to be developed, under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Investigation recommends all Aboriginal cultural heritage and archaeological sites should be protected, and any disturbance or destruction be avoided or if unavoidable, should be kept to a minimum.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign advocates that damage and destruction to Aboriginal cultural heritage sites of significance can be totally avoided by low-key improvements at the site of the existing boat ramp.

Safety and Risk Issues Report

It is claimed in the EES and the Safety and Risk Issues Report that current arrangements at the existing boat ramp site present safety hazards on the road, at the ramp, on the beach, and in the water. It is claimed that the preferred site of the proposed breakwater/ boat ramp development separates the boats from other users in the area, and presents the safest option for all users.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign disputes this report on the basis that there is limited identification of safety issues, and that the risk assessment is incomplete. Hazards at the preferred option site were not identified or assessed, and no consideration given to control measures that could minimise risk at the existing boat ramp site. It is believed that risks to safety that may exist at the present site could be reduced or eliminated by a safety/risk management plan.

Ecology and Geology Impact Assessment

In the EES it is recognised that the greatest impact on ecology and geology would occur at both the site of the preferred option, and at the site of option 2. It is argued in the EES that these impacts are only small in extent, and mitigation measures could be effectively implemented.

The Ecology and Geology Impact Assessment states that the study area is part of a wider area of national significance, and when viewed in isolation, has state significance for biodiversity. The greatest impacts on these values will occur at the sites of options 2 & 3. Further surveys were recommended though not carried out, including a bandicoot survey, an orchid survey, and a geological survey.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign argues that the ecological and geological values of the area are important and should be protected. Suggested mitigation measures do not adequately compensate for the losses incurred. Compromising these values could be avoided by low-key improvements at the site of the existing boat ramp.

Recreation & Visual Values Report

It is claimed within the EES and the Report on Recreation and Visual Values that the preferred option for a breakwater/ boat ramp has least visual impact as compared to the other two sites under investigation because it is furthest away from access and viewing areas. It is also alleged that the preferred site would have least impact on other users, because it is slightly further away from other beach users. Both reports recognise that surfers will be affected, but claim the preferred site will have least affect on surfing.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign is highly critical of this Report. The methodology is subjective, and does not use any empirical data to substantiate the findings on visual values. No empirical data has been gathered on the volume and frequency of the various activities at Bastion Point. The demands of boat users have been given priority over all other users of the area. The footprint of boating will increase substantially, to the detriment of all other users. The preferred site will destroy a significant surf break and will affect all other surf breaks in the area. There is no analysis of the effect of loss of surfing on local businesses or on the town's youth.

All 3 options, including the preferred option, do not give due recognition to the values of this landscape. This is inconsistent with government recommendations for this landscape that is of state significance. Low-key improvements at the present site would respect these values.

Social, Economic & Infrastructure Impacts Report

It is asserted in the EES and the Social, Economic & Infrastructure Impacts Report that the "ocean access boat ramp will provide an overall economic benefit to the local community" (EES p.111).

The Save Bastion Point Campaign strongly rejects this Report. It is based on flawed methodology and data. The benefits that are overstated include the projected increased expenditure on accommodation and food in Mallacoota. The costs that are underestimated, or not included, are the operational costs for the proposed facility, the additional infrastructure required, the mitigation measures recommended in the various Supplementary Reports, and the extra work required with Aboriginal Cultural investigations and monitoring.

The potential losses from tourists who come to Mallacoota for its unspoilt beaches, beauty and surfing are not considered. The Statutory Authority responsible for the management and ongoing capital and operating expenditure is not clearly identified, and the cost of dredging operations could become a burden for ratepayers, tourists and commercial boating users.

The Reports reviewed in this document are Supplements to the East Gippsland Shire Council's EES and can be obtained from www.egipps.vic.gov.au or (03) 5153 9500.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign *URGES* all members of the public to write a submission by the due date of 16 July 2007 opposing this inappropriate breakwater development. See www.savebastionpoint.org for more information on writing a submission.