

Strong support

Sir, I write to express my strong support for the 'Solution for Mallacoota's Bastion Point' which accompanied last Monday's edition of your paper.

Save Bastion Point Campaign has in the past been accused of being in favour of a "do nothing" approach to resolving the problem of improved ocean access from Bastion Point, Mallacoota. However, the concept in your paper demonstrated that there is a workable alternative possible, one which complies with the relevant Australian Standards and is safer, economically more viable and more environmentally friendly than the Council's current major infrastructure proposal.

The alternative also respects Aboriginal cultural sites, retains the important surf breaks and is an equitable solution, preserving the beach for all users.

The alternative concept would be considerably less expensive to build. Council's plan is currently estimated to cost \$5.5 million while the alternative has an estimated cost of approximately \$1.6 million.

Importantly, ongoing maintenance costs for council's option, including dredging, kelp removal and maintaining a two-lane road on an ocean beach subject to frequent storm conditions, would be extremely high. Ratepayers could expect a

significant drain on their purses to pay for this major development.

I would urge councillors who support the current Option 3B proposal to re-think their position, and instead move to establish a community-based process to develop a solution which would be acceptable to the vast majority of Mallacoota's residents and visitors.

As councillors are well aware, their present major, expensive breakwater and road proposal is unsustainable and unacceptable.

Yours etc.,
June Drake,
Mallacoota.

Win-win for community

Sir, Cr Freshwater dismisses the alternative concept for improved ocean access at Bastion Point too readily.

He accuses it as being an 11th hour suggestion and a plan that hasn't undergone rigorous testing (Gippsland ABC).

Cr Freshwater seems to forget that the East Gippsland Shire Council failed to investigate a smaller option as part of its Environment Effects Statement (EES), although many in the community clearly expressed the view that a smaller less damaging alternative should be looked at.

He also ignores the fact that the independent Inquiry Panel appointed to review the EES found the council's preferred option 3B met none of the evaluation objectives well and three highly significant ones poorly, and recommended that it should not proceed.

The panel in fact concluded that a minor upgrade of the existing boat ramp, without breakwaters, is as much as should be done at Bastion Point.

Minister for Planning Justin Madden and subsequently the EGSC chose to reject the recommendations of this comprehensive and thorough panel report. This does not point to rigorous testing. Cr Freshwater. Rather, it sounds like a process that lacks transparency and credibility, and which undermines the public's confidence in our decision makers.

Safety has been heralded as the reason for proceeding with option 3B. The safety audit since commissioned by Marine Safety Victoria does not make option 3B safe: rather, it minimises risk; but only if a whole range of measures are undertaken, some of which may prove impossible to implement.

It may even require a substantial extension to the breakwater down the track. The costs of essential monitoring of the facility and of the ongoing maintenance will be substantial. Who pays?

Full marks to the community for trying to find a workable solution. This concept makes a lot of

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sense: it improves the boating facility, meets relevant Australian Standards, addresses safety issues, and it does so without the huge costs associated with 3B, and without destroying the place for others. It is a win-win solution.

Why wouldn't the council and the Victorian Government consider it?

Yours etc.,
Jenny Mason,
Mallacoota.