

Craig Ingram Ignores Due Process in Asserting that Victorian Government Funding Has Been Committed for a New Boat Ramp at Mallacoota

Craig Ingram demonstrated his lack of respect for the assessment process by prematurely asserting that funding has been committed to building a breakwater headland development at Mallacoota, before the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) has been completed and before an application to the Victorian government for funding has been made.

The Member for East Gippsland issued a press release on Tuesday 15 November 2005 in which he said:

***“... I welcome the government’s commitment in recognising the needs of enhancing access and safety for recreation and commercial fishing and tourism in the region, especially at Mallacoota.*”**

***This funding boost for local ports will provide the opportunity for the urgent upgrade of the boat ramp at Bastion Point, Mallacoota, to be built once the EES is successfully concluded.*”**

Mr Ingram’s statement is incorrect in 3 key respects:

1. The need for enhanced access and safety for recreational and commercial fishing at Mallacoota has yet to be demonstrated by the proponents of this proposal and the draft proposals to date have only put forward unsafe and expensive alternatives to the current arrangements.
2. Should the EES demonstrate a need for enhanced ocean access and safety at Mallacoota, safer and more cost effective alternatives would be preferable to the East Gippsland Shire Council’s current proposal to build a 130m long, 2.5m high rock breakwater headland development, which would effectively destroy surfing at Bastion Point.
3. The Victorian Government’s Moving Forward strategy for Provincial Victoria has not allocated funds for upgrading the boat ramp at Mallacoota. The strategy states that “The Victorian Government will deliver major new investment of \$30 million to enable local ports to upgrade and replace infrastructure, and remain important economic and community assets... Ports likely to benefit from this program include... Mallacoota...”.

The Moving Forward strategy does not say that Mallacoota will benefit from this fund. The Save Bastion Point Campaign has spoken with the Victorian Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and has been told that Mallacoota has yet to demonstrate a need for this funding or to obtain the funding in competition with other applicants. We were informed that any such funding request can only be made after a successful EES process has been completed.

***“Mr Ingram’s statement demonstrates his lack of respect for the democratic process,” said Stephen Chey, spokesperson for the Save Bastion Point Campaign. “Mr Ingram yet again appears to presume that the EES process is just a formality and we hope he is not intent on pushing another agenda.” Mr Ingram’s statement implies that Victorian Government funding has already been allocated for the project, when it has not.*”**

The Save Bastion Point Campaign is trying to provide a voice for the majority of Mallacoota householders, visitors, state and national taxpayers who are appalled at the East Gippsland Shire Council’s proposal to build a 130m long, 2.5m high rock breakwater at Bastion Point and the secretive, undemocratic way in which the proposal has been progressed by its proponents including Craig Ingram and the Mallacoota Ocean Access Committee.

The majority of the community have been effectively excluded from commenting on the Bastion Point breakwater and headland development proposal and participating in the EES process. By excluding community representatives other than Mallacoota Ocean Access Committee members from the EES Steering Committee, the process has divested itself of significant local knowledge and input. As a result, the draft EES proposal documents have been skewed towards the views of the proponents and options such as a managed solution have simply not been considered.

Mr Ingram’s press release of the 15th November is yet another indication of the lack of respect that he and the proponents of the new boat ramp have for due process.

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