

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 8th October 2007

‘Reluctant’ proponent bungles boat ramp Inquiry

The East Gippsland Shire Council would appear to no longer be backing its proposed breakwater/ boat ramp development at Bastion Point Mallacoota.

Council was granted an adjournment of the Inquiry that was to commence in Mallacoota in mid November 2007.

Ros Macvean, Coordinator for the Save Bastion Point Campaign says, “The Council appears to no longer be confident that its large-scale high-impact development will stand up to public scrutiny or have any chance of being approved.”

This is hardly surprising given 87% of written submissions opposed the development. In addition, a number of key agencies are extremely critical of the high impacts it will have on the wilderness coast, its lack of consistency with Government policy and the Council’s failure to present an assessment of alternative lesser-impact options.

Yet in the 7 long years since the Minister for Planning required the Council to prepare an Environment Effects Statement for the development, it has consistently ignored issues raised in community consultations and disregarded expert advice and recommendations from key agencies.

The Council’s approach entering the Inquiry stage has been bungled as is its handling of the entire EES process.

It is now attempting to find a scapegoat. Council even goes so far as to claim it was reluctant from the beginning to be the proponent for the development, asserting that it only assumed the role in the interests of the broader community.

Ms Macvean says, “As a proponent that has pushed its breakwater/ boat ramp option all the way through the EES process, Council now seems to believe Government agencies such as the Department of Sustainability and Environment should give it a tick of approval prior to the public Inquiry. It is a rare occasion when a proponent calls a halt to the last stage in the process because of its concern that defending its proposal may be a futile waste of resources.”

Given the length of time and considerable resources spent by all parties on this process, the public would have preferred the chance to present to the Inquiry the strong evidence opposing the development, believing that it would not gain Ministerial approval. It nevertheless would be pleased if Council now decides to fully abandon the proposal.

The Save Bastion Point Campaign continues to advocate that a decision needs to be made on this issue. It has repeatedly asked relevant Ministers to put in place a solution for Bastion Point to ensure such an inappropriate plan for development cannot be pursued in future years.

Ms Macvean calls on the Minister for Planning and Minister for Environment and Climate Change to step in and take responsibility for the future of Victoria's coastlines. "We urge the Ministers to establish a planning process for the Mallacoota foreshore at Bastion Point that is professionally and transparently managed by an agency other than the East Gippsland Shire Council. Bastion Point needs a low impact facility that provides improved ocean access whilst recognising the limitations of local conditions. Any planning for the area must involve *all* stakeholders and maintain consistency with Government policy and strategy to ensure the high cultural heritage, recreational, environmental and landscape values are protected."

Ends/ends...

MEDIA NOTE:

For more information on Save Bastion Point Campaign –

www.savebastionpoint.org

For a copy of the East Gippsland Shire Council's breakwater/ boat ramp EES –

http://www.egipps.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.asp?Page_Id=586&h=1

For summary by DPCD of the EES process for Bastion Point –

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenpl.nsf/LinkView/A684ED3F5775D64DCA256F2A000EDE6592FBC7C133A6F520CA2572DA007FAB8B>

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