

MEDIA RELEASE

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Community comes together to fight Bastion Point decision

More than 100 members of the Mallacoota community gathered last night to voice their concern about Planning Minister Justin Madden's decision last month to approve a large-scale breakwater and headland development on Bastion Point.

David Huxtable, from local community group Save Bastion Point Campaign, said last night's meeting in Mallacoota showed there was strong and ongoing opposition to the proposed development, but also a willingness to work with the East Gippsland Shire Council to find a practical solution.

"Many people were outraged with Minister Madden's decision to disregard his own expert Panel's recommendations not to go ahead with the development," he said.

"A broad range of people came last night including business and tourism operators, fishermen, surfers, boaters and many other people who feel deeply about our town Mallacoota and its future development.

"The mood at the meeting was that the fight is not over yet. In fact, the determination to fight this decision has now clearly increased. There was also anger about how much money and time had been spent on the inquiry that had been disregarded so quickly, and what this says about the democratic process."

Following a lengthy and comprehensive investigation, the Panel of Inquiry's report found that the proposed development did not satisfy any of the evaluation criteria, including safety, visual impact, cultural heritage, economic considerations and overall societal benefit, and should be rejected.

Of the 480 written submissions to the Panel of Inquiry, 87 per cent opposed the development, more than 90 per cent of public verbal submissions to the Inquiry sessions in Mallacoota opposed the development and no public verbal submissions in Melbourne sessions were supportive of the development.

Only twice in Victoria's history has an independent panel found in favour of a community group rather than a development proposal.

"The community will now call on the Council to show leadership and wisdom when they make their decision about whether or not to go ahead with the development," Mr Huxtable said.

"We hope they choose to accept the Panel's recommendations to establish a broadly based community advisory committee to design an appropriate upgrade to the existing ramp.

"An undisputed resolution was passed at last night's meeting to work together to achieve a just and democratic solution to improve ocean access at Bastion Point, one that is both appropriate and sustainable."

- Ends -

For further comments, please contact David Huxtable on **0419 592 886**.