

Planning Minister betrayed Victorian Coastal Strategy

Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, last Thursday ignored the basic principles of the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 when he announced the go ahead for the controversial Bastion Point breakwater and headland development in Mallacoota.

That was the opinion of the local community action group, Save Bastion Point, the Victorian National Parks Association and the Australian Conservation Foundation called on the Minister to review his decision because the development was strongly opposed by the community and did not follow the environmental protection principles of the Victorian Coastal Strategy.

The groups said that the Minister also went against his own panel report's recommendations, which did not support any of the development proposals because they were thought to be unsafe and have no net economic benefit to society.

Leo op den Brouw, Save Bastion Point spokesman, said the proposal to build an extensive breakwater, access road on the beach, car park and boating channel was unsustainable and unsafe, and would irreversibly damage the Bastion Point environment and surrounding coastline.

"We are concerned that the removal of more than 3,000 cubic metres of reef, to make way for the boating channel, and the addition of more than 8,000 tonnes of imported rock, to construct the 130-metre-long breakwater, will disturb tidal flows and damage the marine habitat," he said.

"The permanent sand dredging re-

quired to keep the boating channel clear will also impact on marine life and cause unnatural siltation build up.

"While the community agrees the existing boat ramp is in need of repair, we believe there are smarter, sustainable and safer low-key developments that will improve ocean access, protect the area's outstanding attractions and values and meet the provisions of the Victorian Coastal Strategy."

ACF oceans campaigner, Chris Smyth, said Minister Madden appeared to have ignored the advice of the expert panel.

"The Minister's approval of the development contradicts the recommendation of his own expert panel, which rejected the proposal after a lengthy and comprehensive inquiry," he said.

He said that more than 85 per cent of submissions to the Environmental Effects Study (EES) public inquiry were strongly opposed to the Bastion Point development. The Gippsland Coastal Board stated it could not support the options set out in the EES because none of them were consistent with the 2002 Victorian Coastal Strategy.

Megan Clinton, VNPA's conservation and campaigns manager, called on the Environment Minister Gavin Jennings to reject the proposal.

"This is a poor decision for our coasts and clearly a failure of the coastal planning system. The Environment Minister must now use his powers under the Coastal Management Act to ensure this environmentally destructive idea is dropped once and for all," she said.



Proposed new site

Existing boat ramp

The controversial Bastion Point ocean access site at Mallacoota. (PS)

Boat ramp welcomed

Mallacoota Ocean Access Committee has warmly welcomed last Thursday's announcement by the Minister for Planning to proceed with the construction of a new ocean boat ramp built to Australian standards at Bastion Point, Mallacoota, as proposed by the East Gippsland Shire Council.

Chairman, Ian Lewis, said: "People I have been able to talk with so far, are delighted that this key project can now progress. As demonstrated by a community ballot, there is clear support within the town for a substantially upgraded facility and much needed parking, to improve the current safety issues surrounding boat launching and retrieval."

"The approval to relocate the site by some 150 metres will reduce conflicts between various users and should eliminate the potential catastrophe of a swimmer or surfer colliding with a boat."

"Make no mistake this issue is central to the well being of the town, given its coastal focus. "We have the most valuable commercial fishery in the State on our door step and a tourism industry sub-

stantially reliant on our coastal resource, whether for fishing, or tourists exploring the natural resources of the wilderness coast.

"It is unacceptable for the town to continue to lose tourism due to a substandard facility and to expect current users to continue to endure difficulties in the safe launching and retrieval of boats. However, that is the reality we have endured over the past 20 years.

"I congratulate the State for announcing its planning approval and look forward to their commitment for an up-

graded facility, being met in partnership with the shire and others.

"It would be remiss not to thank our local members - in particular the Independent Member for Gippsland East, Craig Ingram - for their support for the project to date and importantly the council for undertaking the EES study and their commitment to the process to ensure a suitable facility is achieved. "MOAC looks forward to working co-operatively with all involved to bring this project to fruition in the shortest possible time frame," Mr Lewis said.