

Correspondence

Mystified

Sir,- In response to the article on the proposed new ocean access at Bastion Point Beach, I am mystified by Mallacoota and District Business and Tourism Association's (MADBATA) continued push for East Gippsland Shire Council's proposed breakwall, road along the beach, etc., at that site.

MADBATA is involved in the steering committee taking part in the Federal Government's National Landscapes Program, which has included 300km of our coastline from Bermagui to Cape Conran of which Mallacoota is the heart, as Australia's Coastal Wilderness and, as such, will be promoted by the Government internationally.

The vision of the steering committee on this project is "to focus on value over volume and ensure that any future development retains and enhances the qualities outlined in the positioning statement that make it a unique destination. That is, an accessible yet remote coastal destination where you can stand on the beach with no one else's footsteps but your own". They go on to say "Be sensitive, low impact and complementary to the local natural environment: ensure that the sense of wilderness is maintained; ensure that the natural features re-

main the focus of the experience."

I have difficulty understanding the conundrum MADBATA creates and feel that if the breakwall project goes ahead we could be "killing the goose that laid the golden egg" ie ruining the very drawcard for tourism - our unspoilt (to date) pristine coastline - an increasingly rare and precious commodity in our overdeveloped world. Why should we become a clone of so many other seaside towns, especially when we have the Port of Eden on our doorstep with it being the world's third deepest natural harbour, which is interestingly about to undergo redevelopment.

In fact the expert panel appointed by Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, in its report have advised that "it has not escaped the panel's notice that the wilderness values, significant coastal landscapes and natural beauty of this area are given prominence in nearly all the policy documents sighted." They go on to say, "The panel considers that the impact of the breakwater in the new proposals will have considerable impact on the wilderness and landscape values of Bastion Point and an overall net detriment to tourism."

I feel MADBATA is wanting its cake and to eat it too, and if they get their wish with this devel-

opment, could spoil the very special experience that Mallacoota and surrounds provide at present for both locals and tourists.

Yours etc.,
Jeannette Davey,
Mallacoota.

Panel's findings

Sir, - I was surprised to read the ill informed and inaccurate statements attributed to the chairman of the Mallacoota and District Business and Tourism Association (MADBATA) in support of an Ocean Access Boat Ramp at Bastion Point and published in the *Snowy River Mail* (June 24).

The EES Inquiry Panel carefully considered the Environmental Effects Study (EES), written and oral submissions from the public and evidence from expert witnesses in the fields of economics, planning, engineering and coastal processes. This evidence was tested under cross-examination from legal teams and the findings informed the panel inquiry's report. Following are some of the panel's findings:

In relation to safety, "The panel finds that while the advantages for safety arising from option three are considerable, they are more than offset by the unacceptable risks introduced by option three."

Economic and social benefits as claimed by supporters of the development have been found to be exaggerated or non-existent. "The panel considers that the impact of the breakwaters in the new proposals will have considerable impact on the wilderness and landscape values of Bastion Point and an overall net detriment to tourism." And, "The economic case for the project is very weak and likely to have a benefit cost ratio well below one. There are a number of significant remaining uncertainties in the assumptions that further undermine the economic case." And further, "The panel finds that Option 3b meets none of the evaluation objectives well and

three highly significant objectives poorly. Overall it is unacceptable; having no demonstrated overall societal benefit, and should not be considered further."

Whilst there is some disagreement amongst experts on the quantity of sand that will be entrapped by the proposed breakwater, sand movement remains one of the key economic and operational constraints on any ocean access facility at Bastion Point.

On considering all the information presented to the hearing, "The panel finds that the uncertainty surrounding sediment entrainment rates behind the Option 3, 3b and LS1 breakwater pose an unacceptable level of risk to the project due to:

- * Uncertainty around the practical operation of the facility if the sediment transport rates are higher than estimated;

- * Uncertainty in relation to maintenance dredging costs and overall project viability; and

- * Uncertainty in relation to safe facility operation in the event of a regular bar forming at the channel entrance."

After an exhaustive and comprehensive inquiry, it is clear that the proposals put forward in the EES are unacceptable and pose too many risks and uncertainties to consider proceeding. This makes Minister Madden's decision to proceed incomprehensible and the position taken by MADBATA and other supporters of the development unacceptable.

The ball is now firmly in the hands of the East Gippsland Shire Councilors who can make a decision that will burden ratepayers with an expensive, uneconomic and hazardous facility used by a relatively small number of people or proceed with the recommendations of the panel and initiate a modest upgrade at the existing site.

Yours etc.,
Leo op den Brouw,
Mallacoota