
13. Summary of findings and recommendations

13.1 Findings

The Panel has made the following findings in this report.

Policy

The Panel finds that a new ocean access facility at Bastion Point of the type suggested in the exhibited Options and Option LS1 do not have coastal policy support.

Safety

The Panel finds that while the advantages for safety arising from Option 3 are considerable, they are more than offset by the unacceptable risks introduced by Option 3. These unacceptable risks are firstly to boats entering and leaving the ramp in a confined space bounded by the inter-tidal reef on one side and the breakwater on the other, in the presence of breaking waves side on to the direction of travel of the boat; and secondly through Option 3 being attractive to inexperienced boaters and leading them to put to sea in conditions that are, or may become, dangerous.

Coastal Processes

The Panel finds that Options 3, 3b and LS1 are unlikely to have significant detrimental sediment transport impacts on Betka Beach, the Mallacoota Main Beach or the Mallacoota Inlet.

The Panel finds that the sediment transport impacts of Options 3, 3b and LS1 on the Bastion Point environment (for example smothering) are difficult to quantify because of the rocky shoreline but are likely to be highly localised and unlikely to be significant.

The Panel finds that the uncertainty surrounding sediment entrapment 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.

The Panel finds that the proposed breakwater is likely to have some adverse impact on waves in the vicinity of Bastion Point and particularly the 'Broken Board' surfing area. The Panel is unable to determine whether this impact will result in the 'loss' of the surfing area or some lesser level of impact.

The Panel finds that in relation to climate change, any facilities proposed in the Bastion Point area should be designed in accordance with sea level rise predictions adopted by the Victorian Government.

Marine ecology

The Panel finds that the environment effects on marine ecology of Options 3, 3b and LS1 could be managed and mitigation put in place to reduce residual impacts.

Landscape and visual

The Panel finds that the Do nothing option avoids detrimental impact to the landscape and visual values of Bastion Point, while the proposals will have a significant impact on the landscape and visual values, through the prominence of the breakwater and the road construction, whether in a cutting down to the ramp or along the beach.

The Panel finds that the landscape and visual values are very significant, and should be given considerable weight in the overall evaluation.

Recreation

The Panel finds that the impact of the proposals on the Broken Board surf break are likely to be considerable, while the physical impacts on other surfing and recreational activity are likely to be minor.

Tourism

The Panel finds that the Do nothing option is consistent with the present eco-tourism marketing of Mallacoota, and will support a broad range of activities that comprise the potential growth sector for tourism.

The Panel finds that there is little evidence that the proposals will significantly increase offshore recreational fishing, and it is likely any increase will occur during the peak season so will not assist in off-peak tourism.

The Panel finds that it is likely that the proposals will have an adverse effect on the marketability of the 'wilderness coast' aspect of Mallacoota, and may result in a drop in tourism numbers in excess of the gains accruing to use of the new facility.

Social impacts

The Panel finds that the Do nothing option will have an adverse social impact on those who see the proposals as providing a needed facility and giving a boost to the town.

The Panel finds that adopting the proposals will cause significant social impact, by adversely affecting the natural values of Bastion Point and Mallacoota that a majority of submitters wish to protect.

The Panel finds that the Do nothing Option avoids detrimental impacts on the landscape values of Bastion Point, and on the potential for future recreation and tourism, but will have some ongoing social impact to those who see the construction of the proposal and the increase in game fishing activity as desirable outcomes.

The Panel finds that the other options, involving a breakwater and ramp at Site 3, have significant landscape and social impacts, and will not avoid adverse impacts on recreation and tourism.

Cultural heritage

The Panel finds that the Do nothing Option will not disturb existing sites of Aboriginal artefacts, nor will it further impact on the spiritual values associated with the 'sense of place'. Accordingly it meets Evaluation Objective 5 (*To avoid to the maximum extent practicable, adverse impacts on Aboriginal or post-settlement cultural heritage*) well.

The Panel finds that Option 3 will destroy site 8822-9263 and will impact on two other sites of Aboriginal relics. It will impact significantly on the spiritual values associated with the 'sense of place'. Accordingly it meets Evaluation Objective 5 poorly.

The Panel finds that Options 3b and LS1 will have little impact on sites of Aboriginal artefacts, providing construction work is undertaken sensitively. The options will, however, impact on the spiritual values associated with the 'sense of place'. Accordingly it meets Evaluation Objective 5 partially.

Terrestrial ecology

A planning permit for application 162/2007/P as shown in Appendix D could be issued by the Minister for Planning for native vegetation clearing associated with car park expansion for Option 3 and 3b if these options are pursued.

Minimal vegetation clearing associated with the expanded car parking as shown in Option LS1 is likely be acceptable subject to further detailed assessment and agreement on offsets with DSE.

Any vegetation offsets required to replace vegetation removed as part of the car park expansion envisaged in option LS1 should be planned to replace and/or enhance habitat for the Southern Brown Bandicoot and other local species.

Economics

The Panel finds that the Do nothing Option will not jeopardise the low-impact based tourism future of Mallacoota, while the proposals are likely to have a negative Net Present Value, and a Benefit Cost Ratio below 0.34. A 1% decrease in current visitors would wipe out any gains that are likely to be attracted through increased ocean access.

Overall societal benefit

The Panel finds that Option 3 meets none of the evaluation objectives well, and most poorly. Overall it is unacceptable; having no demonstrated overall societal benefit, and should not be considered 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.

The Panel finds that Option LS1 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.

The Panel finds that the Do nothing option meets all of the evaluation objectives well, save for Safety where it meets the objective partially. Overall it has considerable net community benefit, and is the only acceptable option presented in the EES.

13.2 Recommendations

The Panel recommends in chief on the proposals in the EES:

The environment effects of Options 1, 2 and 3 as exhibited, Options 3a and 3b, and Option LS1 are such that there is no overall societal benefit in progressing these options further and they should be discarded.

The Panel recommends in relation to upgrading the existing ramp:

The Panel does not consider that breakwaters should be considered in the minor upgrading of the existing ramp.

The present ramp is generally considered to be too narrow. Any contemplated upgrade should review its width and consider options to widen it.

The Panel recommends that measures to improve the risk profile of the Special Use Zone be considered and implemented.

The Panel recommends that further studies be undertaken to resolve the issues of:

- **the need for and extent of parking to be provided, and whether any provision should be staged to ensure no oversupply is provided;**
- **the form of the road and parking layout that will minimise visual intrusion and native vegetation removal, with consideration given to the car park layout in Option LS1;**
- **whether the road sloping down to the beach needs to be sealed in some fashion; and**
- **whether beach parking should be restricted or prohibited, or more effectively and actively managed to improve circulation, safety and amenity.**

The Panel recommends that the EGSC establish a broadly based community advisory committee and appoint an independent facilitator to assist EGSC in developing the detailed design of the minor upgrade of the existing ramp, consistent with the general scope set out above.