



22 June 2010

Hon. Gavin Jennings MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Innovation
4 Hamilton Place
Mt Waverley Vic 3148

RE: Friends of Mallacoota v Minister of Planning and Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Australian Coastal Society Ltd. (ACS), I would like to bring to your attention the recent court decision (27 May, 2010) concerning the *process* followed by the Minister for Planning regarding the proposal by East Gippsland Shire Council to construct a breakwater, boat ramp and associated infrastructure at Bastion Point, Mallacoota.

The ACS has followed the proposal and subsequent court case closely and it supports the recommendation by the Ministerially appointed Independent Inquiry Panel (October 2008, released June 2009) for a low level upgrade to the existing boat ramp and car parking area.

However we do not support the subsequent assessment by Minister Madden (June 2009), nor the rationale that supports the reversal of the Inquiry Panel's recommendation. The ACS asks that you give serious consideration to the reasons why the Inquiry Panel and the vast majority of the local community strongly believe that none of the proposed options was an acceptable solution.

Safety issues are at the heart of Minister Madden's assessment to overturn the Inquiry Panel's recommendations. Notwithstanding Minister Madden's important concerns for the safety of recreational users, we consider the potential risks to boaters, in particular, inexperienced boaters, as a result of using the proposed boat ramp under adverse ocean conditions to be significant. Replacing an existing known and managed safety issue (the intermixing of bathers, craft riders and boats) with an unknown and potentially risk adverse issue (inexperienced boaters not able to handle the often dangerous sea conditions in the region) appears not to be a productive solution.

The Inquiry Panel considered a range of issues including: safety; existing policies; coastal processes; marine ecology; aesthetics; recreational amenity; cultural heritage; and economic impacts. It is our considered view that the diminution of environmental quality, aesthetics and cultural heritage are not balanced out by the benefits of this proposal. Further to this, the proposal in its current form will have a negative long-term social and economic impact on Mallacoota. We recognise that boating is an important social and economic activity for the state of Victoria, but the use and appreciation of coasts and beaches by other users is both higher and more valuable.

Minister Jennings, so much of our coastline has been developed in the name of progress. Only in recent decades has society come to the realisation that the best way to add social and economic value to a coast is to often leave it alone.

We ask that you do not give consent to the Bastion Point proposal in its current form, but choose to uphold the findings on the Inquiry Panel for an upgrade to the existing boat ramp and car parking area.

We request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to further discuss this issue prior to you making a decision about the future of this wilderness coast.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof Geoff Wescott
Vice-President
Australian Coastal Society