

Letters to the Editor

Some 10 years ago my wife and I moved from Melbourne onto a 500 acre property at Wallagaraugh; a relatively unspoilt paradise. The reason for such a sea change was that we had unfortunately witnessed the destruction of vast areas of wildlife habitat on the Mornington Peninsula due to poorly regulated development - so called progress.

Having been part of the driving force instrumental in forcing the Kirner / Hawke Governments to purchase the Greens Bush area for \$12.1 million - making it a national park in the late 1980s - we then observed the insidious cancerous advance of development into the adjacent areas. Until today, the 2000 acre National Park is just a small pristine isolated island of vegetation, surrounded by a sea of suburbia, with all manner of feral intruders preying upon the remaining beleaguered indigenous wildlife.

The East Gippsland Shire ought to hang their heads in shame to even contemplate such an abortive destruction of a most revered piece of coastal landscape: Bastion Point, Mallacoota. Obviously they do not comprehend the degradation their actions will wreak upon Mallacoota's coastal lake and river ecosystems. Being totally ignorant is

one thing, but do I sniff the tainted air of a commercial minority pushing for short term gain whilst creating everlasting shame.

Without doubt, Mallacoota is still the Jewel in East Gippsland Shire's crown - merely because it's access is so limited - tourism, including ecotourism and recreational fishing, are it's major commercial values whilst remaining semi-isolated and commercially lacklustre; unlike Merimbula and the Gold Coast which have become 'flogged out tinsel towns'! To date Mallacoota's magnificent priceless coastal landscape, natural bush, lakes and abundant wildlife set it apart; so long as greed and pecuniary interests can be kept at bay.

My previous company Wetland & Wildlife Creations has spent 35 years restoring and rehabilitating damaged rivers - creeks - lakes and coastal erosion caused by inappropriate development and engineers who knew all about how to tame and control aquatic ecosystems. Every project we rectified could undisputedly be traced back to human exploitation in keeping with Minister Madden's disastrous Bastion Point proposal.

However an upgrade of the existing ramp would be likely to create little or no further impact, than what has previously occurred to the existing landform from it's original installation. Minister Madden's totally inappropriate proposal will open up Pandora's Box creating major erosion - subsequent sand drifts and environmental degradation.

Alarm bells should be ringing when the Bastion Point development consultants discuss having to dredge regularly. Take Lakes Entrance for instance, its once pristine waters being constantly dredged, algae blooms rife, and no authority wants to bite the bullet and face the reality of their previous ineptness, rather, they just allow developers to move on and destroy fresher greener pastures e.g. Mallacoota.

Look at what has already occurred due to logging, cattle and high speed boats in the catchments of the Genoa and Wallagaraugh, both rivers and the entrance are filling with silt. The Bastion Point engineering proposal will become a structural nightmare and totally

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destroy the supposedly government protected coastal ecosystem and multi-million dollar irreplaceable landscape. In 10 to 20 years time the magnificent Mallacoota Lake system will become like the rest of East Gippsland Shire's controlled lakes and rivers - 'stuffed' from the top end and aborted at the entrances!

The handful of ill-informed boat owners who travel up the 3 km river frontage of our property at 50 not 5 knots leaving a wake that undercuts the banks - subsequently destroying the very vegetation the fish need to breed and feed in - causing it to slump and get washed downstream, are possibly the same people that the Shire and Government are pandering to, totally ignoring the findings of their own Environmental Effects Statement!

So councillors and politicians, when your watch is over - as it will so inevitably be - I hope you can go to your graves with a clear conscience! Not leaving behind a grubby trail or a mire of self interest, corruption, scandal, and environmental destruction. "Beware your proposed actions are irreversible!"

Yours faithfully
Tony Brindley




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