

Wed. July 1st 2009

Strong support?

Sir, - I would like to respond to an article which appeared last week (page three, June 24). I feel that there are some anomalies in it that need clarification. The writer failed to state that an expert panel had been appointed by the Government, which undertook an extensive inquiry into the shire's preferred boat ramp and carpark proposal. It does not say that Justin Madden's decision to give the go ahead to this proposal contradicts his own expert panel's advice.

* The writer alleges that expert studies have

demonstrated there will be major economic and social benefits. The panel, however, determined "The economic case for the project is very weak and likely to have a cost ratio benefit well below one. There are significant remaining uncertainties in the assumption that further undermines the economic case."

Also "the economic case for the proposals based on increased recreational ocean boating is flawed, and that the economic prosperity of Mallacoota rests on sustainable nature based tourism, and low impact activities, compatible with nature based tourism".

* The writer also states

that indigenous heritage and environmental issues are covered in this proposal. But the expert panel found that the proposal had unacceptable visual impact, and failed to fully satisfy the stated evaluation objectives including cultural heritage, terrestrial ecology, social benefit, sediment movement and water quality.

* The writer further states that ongoing costs will be minimal. The panel found that "concern is that the facility should not become an essentially failed project that becomes a financial burden on the people of East Gippsland". Regarding dredging it considers "the operational cost on EGSC or the facility operator could be such as to render the facility unviable."

* The Minister, Mr Madden, cites safety reasons in his reasoning to give this proposal the green light but the panel concludes: "The panel has serious concerns in relation to safety of all the new proposals."

The writer finally states that the decision to go ahead with the proposal should be welcomed by the Mallacoota community but why should this be the case when the panel found that "Overall it is unacceptable: having no demonstrated overall societal benefit?"

Yours etc.,
Libby Greig
Mallacoota