

MELBOURNE RALLY: Bastion Point - postcard perfect or paradise paved?

Monday 10 December, 2012

Beachgoers will flock to Parliament House today hoping to end a 22-year battle to protect one of the state's best beaches from a development that would wipe out the local surf break and bury the foreshore under bitumen.

Victorian environment minister Ryan Smith is expected to make a decision on the controversial development at Mallacoota's Bastion Point before Christmas.

"This will be a massive litmus test for the Victorian Government's coastal planning credentials," said Mr Op den Brouw, spokesman for the Save Bastion Point Campaign.

"The government's own independent planning panel ruled that the proposal contradicts coastal policy, and a recent review led by the Department of Transport recommended a range of lower impact options."

Beach lovers and surfers will rally at Parliament steps, Melbourne CBD, at 12 noon today in protest against the beach being destroyed by a giant breakwater and access road on the beach. Look for surfboards, board shorts, zinc cream, thongs and music.

The rally has been organised by the Save Bastion Point Campaign with support from the Victorian National Parks Association and Surfrider Foundation Australia. It will also present an online petition signed by nearly 2000 supporters.

Mr Op den Brouw said the local council had thumbed its nose at community opposition to the development.

"The East Gippsland Shire Council is determined to push ahead with this destructive and unnecessary dinosaur development even though close to 90 per cent of the community have consistently voiced strong opposition to the proposal," he said.

"We have always agreed that improved open water access is needed at Bastion Point and have put a sustainable low impact alternative on the table that meets the majority of the criteria defined by the Department of Transport.

"The State Government has a golden opportunity to take a leadership position and not allow the East Gippsland Shire Council to pave paradise. Let's put an end to this 80s style over-development."

Surfrider Foundation Australia has stood side by side with the Save Bastion Point campaign and recently listed Bastion Point in the top eight waves on their Endangered Waves Campaign.

"This development would not only submerge the famed Broken Boards surf break under a pile of rocks, but the whole surfing and beachgoers' experience would also be ruined," said Dr Rex Campbell, Chairman of Surfrider Foundation Australia.

"Surfrider is a national organisation and has affiliates worldwide, so our supporters in both Australia and internationally will be watching the outcome closely."

The Victorian National Parks Association has also been a long-time supporter of the campaign to protect Bastion Point from over-development.

"Bastion Point is an incredibly unique and much-loved part of Victoria's natural heritage and needs to be protected," said Simon Branigan, VNPA's Marine and Coastal Project Officer.

Doorstop interviews will be available at Parliament House steps, Monday 10 December from 12 noon.

High Resolution Images Available on Request – email coordinator@savebastionpoint.org

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