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Proposal for a 'marina' near Stansbury

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent (FGSV) is a membership-based community group passionate about the conservation of the environment and ecosystems of Gulf St Vincent. It was formed in August 2003. We write in support of representations from the Oyster Bay Preservation Committee established on behalf of residents, business interests and visitors to that part of the Yorke Peninsula.

In our submission to the ERDC Inquiry into Coastal Development late in 2006, we referred to the studies by Macquarie University on factors affecting long-term house prices in Australia. Put simply, the most recent published report from that unit pointed out the futility of Governments believing they could boost housing prices in an area by giving special development status to proposed developments. World economic conditions since then have simply borne out the evidence of the Macquarie University research.

Perhaps of greater concern is that the marina proposal for Stansbury is in fact a building development to establish 200 building allotments over seawater to extract higher real estate prices at the expense of the local marine environment and degradation of the local scenic quality. Imagine the reaction from residents of Adelaide if a marina development like the one proposed for Stansbury was proposed to be built alongside any one of the jetties along the metropolitan coast of Adelaide? There would be a public outcry!

In common with most of South Australia, there is no shortage of land for conventional development at Stansbury that would not result in degradation of the scenic quality of the coast and not be at risk from the very real threat of sea-level rises from global warming as highlighted by the recent rejection of the Marion Sands development proposal for Marion Bay by the Supreme Court of SA in March 2008. Further the impacts on the marine environment would be minimised if the stormwater runoff from the development was well managed and prevented from entering the Gulf.

It is important to keep in mind that the current damage to Adelaide coastal waters was largely a consequence of poor South Australian Government decision making in the past and by the predecessor of SA Water, the Engineering & Water Supply Department. The Adelaide Coastal Waters Study (ACWS) found that 'extensive loss of seagrass meadows is one of the most apparent indications that the ecological health of the Adelaide coastal system is endangered' (Fox 2006).

Clearly it is time to preserve and protect the remaining marine environments of Gulf St Vincent for future generations from development proposals where other solutions exist that do not put the marine environment at risk.

In our 2006 submission, we also pointed out that long after the developer had creamed off any short term profits, local communities will have to carry the on-going environmental and amenity costs which will be higher than it otherwise would be for a land based development. There are too many examples of this with recent coastal developments in Adelaide that have resulted in increased costs for the community to pay for coastal management.

One unfortunate characteristic of marina proposals, shown again in the approaches by the Stansbury Development Company, is the lack of definitive plans. We read that a 1.7 kilometre channel 'may' need to be excavated. Recent work by the CSIRO ACWS (2006) on the health of reefs and sea grass beds in the Gulf has confirmed the long term impact of turbidity on the biota of the Gulf.

In the Adelaide case, in addition to stormwater, much of that impact has come from silt resulting from the deepening of the channel to Outer Harbour, which was effectively excused from compliance with EPA guidelines, under special development approval.

The 'Friends' request the most stringent examination of the need for such a channel, who would pay for it and its maintenance, and how it would be done consistent with what were, until the Outer Harbour precedent, guidelines that reflected our national commitment to the international protocols on environmental management of dredging. We emphasize our concern over dredging because of the now unfortunate precedents of the Outer Harbour channel, and of the access channel to the marina at Wallaroo, which was not part of the original proposal.

The 'Friends' held a public forum at West Beach on 2nd March 2008 to consider the 'Coastal Development' report of the ERDC, and more recently we held a forum at Port Wakefield on 12th October, where we heard more of the likely environmental impacts, including those on Aboriginal heritage, from the works proposed for Stansbury. Also Marine Parks being proposed by the Department of Environment and Heritage should not be put at risk by any current or future developments that are likely to impact the Gulfs.

We would be pleased to enlarge on any aspect of our concerns about this proposal. The 'Friends' credentials on the Gulf environment were further established in 2008 with the publication of the 500 page 'Natural History of Gulf St Vincent', which is a continuation of the handbook series of the Royal Society of South Australia.

Yours sincerely

John Caldecott
President

REFERENCES:

Abelson, Peter, Joyeux, Roselyne, Milunovich, George and Chung, Demi; Explaining House Prices in Australia: 1970-2003. Economic Record, Vol. 81, No. S1, pp. S96-S103, August 2005. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=783226>