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Ms Nicole Maloney
Planning Panels Victoria
Department of Sustainability and Environment
P O Box 500
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Ms Maloney

BASTION POINT OCEAN ACCESS BOAT RAMP E.E.S.

Firstly, apologies for being a few days late with this submission but it is sometimes difficult for a member-based organisation such as ours to consult our local members and to respond to all relevant conservation issues within the required time-frames.

BOCA is a national non-government organisation with more than 3000 members throughout Australia. BOCA's objectives may be summarised as appreciation, education and conservation relating to Australian birds and their habitat. Consequently this submission will be limited to issues relating to impacts on birds and their habitat.

Mallacoota is a very important area for birdlife, with a great diversity of habitats supporting at least 300 species. It is a very popular location for bird watching and visited by many BOCA members for that purpose. For example BOCA's most recent organised visit to Mallacoota (21-26 March 2007) was quickly booked to capacity with a waiting list of hopefuls.

BOCA has serious concerns about the potential impact of the proposed Bastion Point development on birdlife. There are two major issues – the birds in the immediate vicinity of Bastion Point and the birds on offshore islands.

In the East Gippsland Birding Guide produced by the East Gippsland Branch of BOCA Bastion Point is specifically mentioned as a site to visit for shorebirds, Red-capped Plover, Hooded Plover and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Many of the shore birds and other species are listed in Conventions or Agreements under the Commonwealth EPBC Act and some, such as the

Hooded Plover and White-bellied Sea-Eagle are listed under the Victorian FFG Act. I understand that the Panel will have access to a full list

of birds in the Bastion Point area along with their status under Commonwealth and State legislation, but BOCA can provide this, if required.

The proposed development at Bastion Point involving clearing of bushland, construction of the breakwater, launching ramp and car park and the ongoing dredging will permanently alter the existing wildlife habitat. The increased level of public use will impact on those species which do not readily adapt to the presence of people and their pets. Also of concern is the proposed fish-cleaning station which will inevitably attract more Silver Gulls which are predators of nesting shorebirds.

Two nearby islands, Gabo and Tullaberga, are very important breeding sites for Little Penguins, Short-tailed Shearwaters and White faced Storm Petrels. It has been estimated that Gabo Island may support the largest single breeding colony of Little Penguins in the world while Tullaberga Island hosts up to one-third of Victoria's White-faced Storm-Petrels.

The upgraded Bastion Point launching ramp facility will bring a much greater number of recreational boaters many of whom will be attracted to Gabo and Tullaberga Islands. This has the potential to cause significant damage to the breeding habitat of the Little Penguins, Short-tailed Shearwaters and White-faced Storm-Petrels through trampling of their nesting burrows and destruction of vegetation. While this may be ameliorated to some extent through regulations and regular patrols by Parks Victoria, this will be a costly process.

For the reasons outlined above BOCA opposes the proposed development of ocean access boat ramp facilities at Bastion Point.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Richard Hunter
CEO