

Enclosed harbour expensive, risky and unnecessary: letter



Way back when: Warrnambool's Lady Bay has been subject to many 'calming' measures over the years, all of which have had significant environmental impacts – now the push is on to build a fully enclosed harbour. (Image: Victorian State Library)

[box] The Warrnambool City Council is getting closer to making a decision on how to improve boat launching facilities at the breakwater, with increasing political pressure to build a fully enclosed harbour. Bruce Campbell explains why this is the worst option:[/box]

By Bruce Campbell

Leader, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group

Member of Safer Launching & Retrieval of Boats Community Reference Group

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'C[/dropcap]r Brian Kelson's [call to construct a fully enclosed harbour](#) flies in the face of the very thorough consultation process that he himself was involved in.

One section of the boating community is conveniently ignoring the facts and aggressively lobbying councillors in order to pursue their self-interest.

The Safer Launching and Retrieval of Boats project is about precisely that: finding a way to launch and retrieve boats more safely.

It is not about spending millions of taxpayer dollars on a pipe dream to try to steal some of Portland's competitive advantage. I hate to break the bad news but Portland's deepwater harbour and proximity to fishing grounds will always outcompete Warrnambool.

The project is also not about floating restaurants (yes, this has seriously been proposed) or the floating seasickness medical centres that would then be required beside them. The project is not about creating mayhem on Pertobe Road with queues of cars and boat trailers preventing locals and non-fishing tourists from enjoying Lake Pertobe and the foreshore.

The project is also not about choosing the most expensive and environmentally risky option – a fully enclosed harbour – rather than the cheapest but completely practical option – installing a larger, cleverly designed boat ramp that reduces wave surge and ongoing dredging.

According to the project's technical advisory group, this simple option will successfully provide safer boat launching and retrieval for 90% of the time. 90% also happens to be the proportion of time that ocean conditions make it safe enough for boats to leave the harbour.



The proposed enclosed harbour: one of three options under consideration for the Warrnambool breakwater. Image: Warrnambool City Council.

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'C[/dropcap]oastcare groups, less vocal sections of our boating community and many passive recreational users of the harbour area do not want to see a fully or partially enclosed harbour for a range of reasons. Many fishers also do not want to see this because they understand the potential environmental impacts on fish numbers.

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There are serious concerns with the unknown long term impacts of new breakwaters on beach erosion and sand movement and with the likely introduction of marine pest species to Merri Marine Sanctuary via increased numbers of boats and trailers. There are many examples of this occurring after harbour developments, including at Apollo Bay where the nearby marine sanctuary is now threatened by an invasive pest.

Our Merri Marine Sanctuary protects a very large number of significant plants and animals and it produces a large quantity of fish that supports recreational and professional fishing. For example, on a calm day professional lobster fishers know to set their pots just outside the sanctuary for good catches. Putting this at risk would be a very poor and shortsighted decision.

The minimal development option will provide safer boat launching and retrieval, will allow the sailing community to continue their activities unhindered, will not destroy the wider community's enjoyment of our wonderful Lake Pertobe and foreshore area, will cost less taxpayer's money and will be the least environmentally risky.

And finally, for those who love to just sit in the car at the harbour carpark and look across Lady Bay, you won't lose your view."

Bruce Campbell

[box] You can download the WCC's discussion paper [on the proposals here](#) (pdf)[/box]