

DS&E  
Strategic Planning and Policy Officer  
Level 10  
8 Nicholson Street  
East Melbourne Vic 3002

1<sup>st</sup> march 2010

Dear Rebecca

The Walkerville Progress Association (WPA) requests that there be a democratic public election held by Department of Sustainability & Environment (DS&E) for committee members to the Walkerville Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management (FCM) as set out in;

Appendix 4  
Public election for a community elected committee  
Committee of Management  
Responsibilities & Good Practice Guidelines  
Crown Land Management  
Version 1 May 2002

There is considerable dissatisfaction within the general community, boaters and campers about the way the reserve is managed by the FCM concerning transparency and process

For the past nine years or so the public and those within the “community of interest” have only had the opportunity to nominate for appointment for positions on the FCM , which have then been then made by DS&E...who then seek advice from the FCM who have there own agenda.

This practice has led to reappointment of virtually the same committee members each term or to the vetting of new appointments to ensure that the existing policies are unlikely to undergo major change and the balance is maintained to DS&E and FCM liking.

For many years the FCM has blatantly refused to or seriously consider making changes on some issues of importance in line with the majority opinions of the wider stakeholder community in preference to its own in-house agenda.

For example: In 1997 in spite of 68% of 199 respondents to a FCM survey requesting safer and improved launching and retrieval facilities. Nothing was done. This survey was subsequently reported as a majority opposed to improvements. (Walkerville Foreshore Reserve Management Plan 2001. Swimming Boating and Fishing. 4.2.4)

In early 2002 a meeting was convened by the then minister (Mrs. Cheryl Garbutt) in an endeavour to reach a compromise on safer launching and retrieval facilities. \$35000 was given to the FCM to make some improvements. Nothing was done.

An expensive (A \$50000) Coastal and Erosion Study was commissioned by the FCM in 2002. In December 2005 public comment and submissions was invited on a number of options put forward by the FCM.

Again after some 481 submissions of the options put forward by the FCM and a response that 78% of respondents wanted major improvements, the FCM concluded "*that only a minimal boat ramp improvement facility was required*" and although 77% of respondents supported an option for erosion control the Contractors were instructed not to proceed with that concept

(Coastal Erosion Study and Works Design. Walkerville Foreshore. Final Report November 2007)

In November 2008 in response to the expensive coastal erosion study which recommended in part various alternatives for improving boat launching facilities, the FCM instead engaged landscape consultants to provide landscape and carpark improvements at north walkerville....there is no plausible connection between this and the coastal erosion study.

This plan proposed the reduction of car parking for visitors and boaters from a known 60 to 70 places to a maximum 30.

It proposed the planting of indigenous vegetation along the foreshore, which would then also restrict the area available for visitors etc.

It further made no provision for the safety and well being of those launching and retrieving boats across the sand or for swimmers or other beach users that were expected to use the same areas.

It proposed a very expensive refurbishment to an existing sea wall and completely ignored major erosion problems elsewhere.

It is understood that this development plan was produced at the request of the FCM by consulting engineers and to this date there has been no results released or what the costs have been.

The WPA contends that the majority of the existing foreshore committee has no interest in promoting or developing Walkerville as a destination for recreational use by increased visitors as set out in the; *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation, Final Report. Environment Conservation Council 2000*

Furthermore the FCM has stated in a document calling for submissions from **select** groups to revise its 2001 Management Plan, that it will not revisit its negative ruling ( as stated above) on boat safety, launching and retrieval and which are contrary to *The Marine Safety, Victoria. Final Report 2006* or stated government policy for boat ramps. *Victorian Coastal Boating Strategy 2008*

While there have been some good improvements to the public toilets and the playground in the camping ground there is a seemingly ongoing reluctance to do anything above and beyond what is absolutely necessary, lest walkerville become an attractive destination by people having a positive family recreational experience and overwhelming the place. There is a lot of room for sensible middle ground activity with modest improvements that will never be achieved with the current "keep em out" approach.

There must be an honest appraisal by the DS&E of who the stakeholders really are at Walkerville, A committee of management representative of ALL the stakeholders which 'PERISH THE THOUGHT INCLUDES FISHERMEN, DAY TRIPPERS, PICNICERS AND TOURISTS' and not just local landholders and environmentalists. These landholders and environmentalists must be included on the committee...but in proportion to the wider representation required and certainly not as the sole arbiters.

We await your advice on these matters and hope we don't finish up in the usual loop of you seeking advice from DS&E Traralgon who in turn seek advice from the WFCM who turn go back through the chain and tell us once again everything is OK. Things aren't OK and haven't been for a long time, the local fishing club have asked the ombudsman to take their cause to the government because of many years of similar frustrations. There are no bad people in this loop but certainly too much ideology.

Yours faithfully

Steve Graham  
President

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