

Key Issues for the Hastings Foreshore District Plan

The Hastings Foreshore Precinct plan opens and talks about attracting and welcoming visitors and residents to use the foreshore. It has a key objective of promoting and enhancing the role of the foreshore as a regional boating precinct. Its strategies include commercial boating operations and boating. It has a key action for an improved public boat ramp and associated facilities. It states Hastings is a location for strategic investment in boating and is a regional facility. The Plan proposes minor improvements of the boat ramp facility.

Boat Ramp Delays and Ramp Rage

It also talks about the delays when launching boats and ramp rage and how this boat ramp facility is the 2nd busiest in the Mornington Peninsula with all year-round usage demand. It does not address the issues of why there are delays when launching and retrieving boats and the subsequent ramp rage and whether it is hoped that that the proposed boat facility improvements will reduce the boat launching delays and the ramp rage. The basic issue of boat ramp delays is the time taken by each boat ramp user when their trailer is parked on the ramp while they actually launch or retrieve their boat. Some users are experienced, taking a minimum time and others take longer. Some take a few minutes and others take several minutes or longer. The number of boats that can be launched or retrieved per hour on each ramp during busy times is set by the time taken by each user to reverse in to position on the ramp, launch or retrieve and drive off the ramp. The problem that causes considerable time delays at boat ramps is when many users want to launch or retrieve at the same time. People start and finish work at similar times or want to launch at dawn or all return to the ramp when the weather blows up. The Australian Standards for boat ramps was written a long time ago and does not cater for these surges of usage. It talks in terms of 40 parking bays per ramp, not in the terms of how to minimise delays at ramps during busy times. The only way to substantially reduce delays in busy times is to have more ramps. There is government funding available for boat ramp construction.

Proposed Boat Facilities Improvements

The proposed boat ramp facility improvements such as improving traffic flows in the car park and extending the ramps further into the water are certainly needed. There is government funding available for these types of works. It is a

fact that the average size of boats is increasing and these bigger boats need more depth of water to avoid damage when launching. Improvements which make it easier to tow, park and reverse boats and trailers and launch and retrieve boats from the water make boating need to be a high priority and will boating more enjoyable.

Landscaping Boat Facilities

Planting trees to beautify the boat trailer parking area must be planned very carefully. Trees cannot overhang the parking bays and the through lanes where boat/trailer are parked and towed. Many boats are large and have high infrastructure such as windscreens, canopies, rod storage racks with valuable fishing rods pointing to the sky. Overhanging trees damage boats and gear.

Interactions with Pedestrians Bikes and Cars

Often planners want to create parking areas for cars within boat launching facilities so the others can enjoy the view etc. At boat ramp facilities, interactions with others must be kept to a minimum. Boaters are towing and reversing boats, often large boats and in busy conditions and it is dangerous when others are allowed or directed to use this same area. These interactions need to be minimised for safety of users.

Expansion of the Boat Ramp Facility

The report talks of the huge growth in the district. The State Government has an active and committed policy to expand recreational fishing to one million fishers and provided substantial funding to this goal. Hastings has many local businesses which service, build and repair boats and trailers. The one crucial factor as to whether the boating industry shrinks or expands in the district is how easy is it for boaters to launch and retrieve and use their boats. The Foreshore plan assumes that the four ramps will meet all future demands. The plan must address growth and the much-needed expansion of boat ramp facilities to cater for future growth.

Fish Club Facilities

The Foreshore plan must support the local fishing club and its operations. It is part of the local community.

Personally, I live in the district, I have been an active boater for the past 40 years and I put together the VRFish boat ramp report to which is a reference document on the plan. I am a member of the Tooradin Angling Club, the South Gippsland Angling Clubs Association and VRFish. I have been involved with many boating facilities across the state. Please feel free to contact me for comment.

Max Fletcher – mfletche2@westnet.com.au - 0418390230