Attention Neale Burgess MP - Chair

Dear Neale

I would like to make a submission on behalf of the Mornington Peninsula Marine Alliance to the enquiry.

The MP Alliance has been established with the direct support and commitment of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council which has in addition to initially funding the sector survey to determine the scope and scale of issues and need, has continued to provide $ for $ funding to the founding business members to create a pool of funds to enable start-up activities and membership drive efforts to continue.

The MP Marine Alliance is intended to function as an advocacy body for the Marine Sector on the Mornington Peninsula identifying and supporting action on addressing matters impacting on the economic viability and success of businesses and not for profit organisations dependent on access to and use of the coastline and bays surrounding the Mornington Peninsula.

Initial survey work by the Shire auspiced by their Economic Development unit indicated that there are about 100 business entities forming the sector, employing some 1100 people in both full and part time jobs and contributing around $100million per annum to the peninsula economy.

Arising form this initial survey work 6 local marine sector businesses formed a steering committee and agreed to put $2000 each into a pool matched by the council funds and that this money could pay for executive officer support to develop a constitution and initiate a membership drive as well as produce a newsletter and commence some limited advocacy work on strategic matters.

The Alliance has in the 18 months since conception met with local Parliamentary members, the Minister for Tourism, and advisors of the Minister for Ports and is actively working with the Shire on projects to be implemented in the coming financial year (2012/13) on strategic planning framework review and upgrading on matters impacting on the sector including;

- Boating Facility Capacity review for the review of Coastal Action Plan
- Marine Precinct Planning Review
- Port of Hastings Implementation Study

The Shire and the Alliance through this partnership model have also secured $65k in Federal Funds to undertake a study into the feasibility of the Marine Sector on the Mornington Peninsula and this study will look at the issues impacting on the viability
of businesses and the workforce development and training needs. The Boating Industry Association (BIA) has also agreed to participate in this study. The study has as a key element, an examination of the impacts of the significant reduction in access to TAFE training opportunities for the sector and will seek to identify how this can be effectively addressed to ensure the sector can offer necessary and exciting training to its workforce in a sustainable way.

The Alliance has secured Searoad Ferries as an Alliance member and through our engagement with that company and with the Shire, in its role as a key player in Regional Tourism, successfully nominated the CEO of Searoad Ferries for a place on the Mornington Peninsula Tourism Board. This action will help to strengthen the bonds between tourism and the marine businesses on the peninsula.

Those businesses contacted and asked about their interest in joining the Alliance have all indicated support in principle but are reluctant to part with money to pay a membership when the Alliance is only just in its formative stage - this is a bit of Catch 22 as without their membership, funds are very limited and do not allow extensive commitment to undertaking advocacy and business support initiatives. These businesses want to see results before the commit!!

To date eight significant enterprises operating in the sector and covering activities including Boat and Maritime Infrastructure and Electronics manufacturing, Marina Management, Marine Transport Operation and Major Yacht Club management have joined the Alliance and interest within the sector continues to grow but it is a slow process.

The Shire recognised this problem and has helped to try and address it through its start-up funding and has undertaken to continue its support for the current financial year. Whether this is enough remains to be seen as many of the issues raised by businesses and groups relate to longer term planning matters and it may well take some years to get runs on the board.

In the context of your committee's review and having regard to the success of this model to date and the potential of the Marine sector, but also having regard to the reluctance of business to "pay money", this submission argues that it would be cost effective and beneficial if the State was to adopt a collaborative model with Local government and implement a three way funding arrangement that would generate more capacity to engage with the sector and initiate advocacy actions so that runs on the board could be more quickly be gained and business support secured.

As the economic success of local businesses is so fundamentally linked to land use and planning matters, it is imperative that the Local Council and the State Government (through the Minister for Planning and Environment) be actively engaged in initiatives like the establishment of Mornington Peninsula Marine Alliance.

I would be happy to discuss this initiative further with your committee.
Kind Regards

Bruce Douglas
Executive Officer
Mornington Peninsula Marine Alliance