

DUNSBOROUGH BOAT HARBOUR PROPOSAL

Public Works Department

Report and Recommendation

by the

Environmental Protection Authority



**Department of Conservation and Environment
Perth, Western Australia**

Bulletin 217

September 1985

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1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Works Department has proposed the construction of a fishing boat harbour at Point Picquet near Dunsborough.

The Authority notes that there is a perceived need for a boat harbour facility in the Geographe Bay area which is felt across a range of potential users. However, the Authority recommends that the proposal should not proceed and recommends a number of initiatives which would ensure that a boating facility is provided on Geographe Bay which will suit the needs of all groups.

The Authority's recommendations are:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The EPA recommends that a broad regional plan be completed prior to the establishment of boating facilities on Geographe Bay. The plan should identify potential sites for a boat harbour (and other facilities) that are compatible with the objectives of the plan, that will accommodate appropriate infrastructure and that will meet the needs of the professional fishermen and the boating public.

RECOMMENDATION 2

In the absence of a regional plan, the EPA recommends that a boat harbour should not be constructed at Point Picquet.

2. BACKGROUND

Investigations into providing a boating facility in the Dunsborough area have been underway for a considerable number of years and have been reported on by the Public Works Department. Detailed investigations on several sites were continuing but received a new impetus when the Southwest Development Authority indicated its commitment to a proposal. The EPA asked that an ERMP be prepared and this was made available for public review from 18 May, 1985 to 29 July, 1985.

At the time that the public review period commenced the Minister for Works was the responsible Minister, however on 1 July, 1985 responsibility for this proposal was transferred to the Minister for Transport.

3. THE PROPOSAL

The ERMP described a proposal to site a boat harbour on the rocky coast between Dunsborough and Cape Naturaliste, at a small bay known as Point Picquet. Armour stone would be provided from a quarry site in the hill immediately behind Point Picquet (see Figures 1 and 2). A two-stage harbour development was proposed and the ERMP sought "approval" from the EPA for Stage 1 and "approval in principle" for Stage 2. The ERMP made the

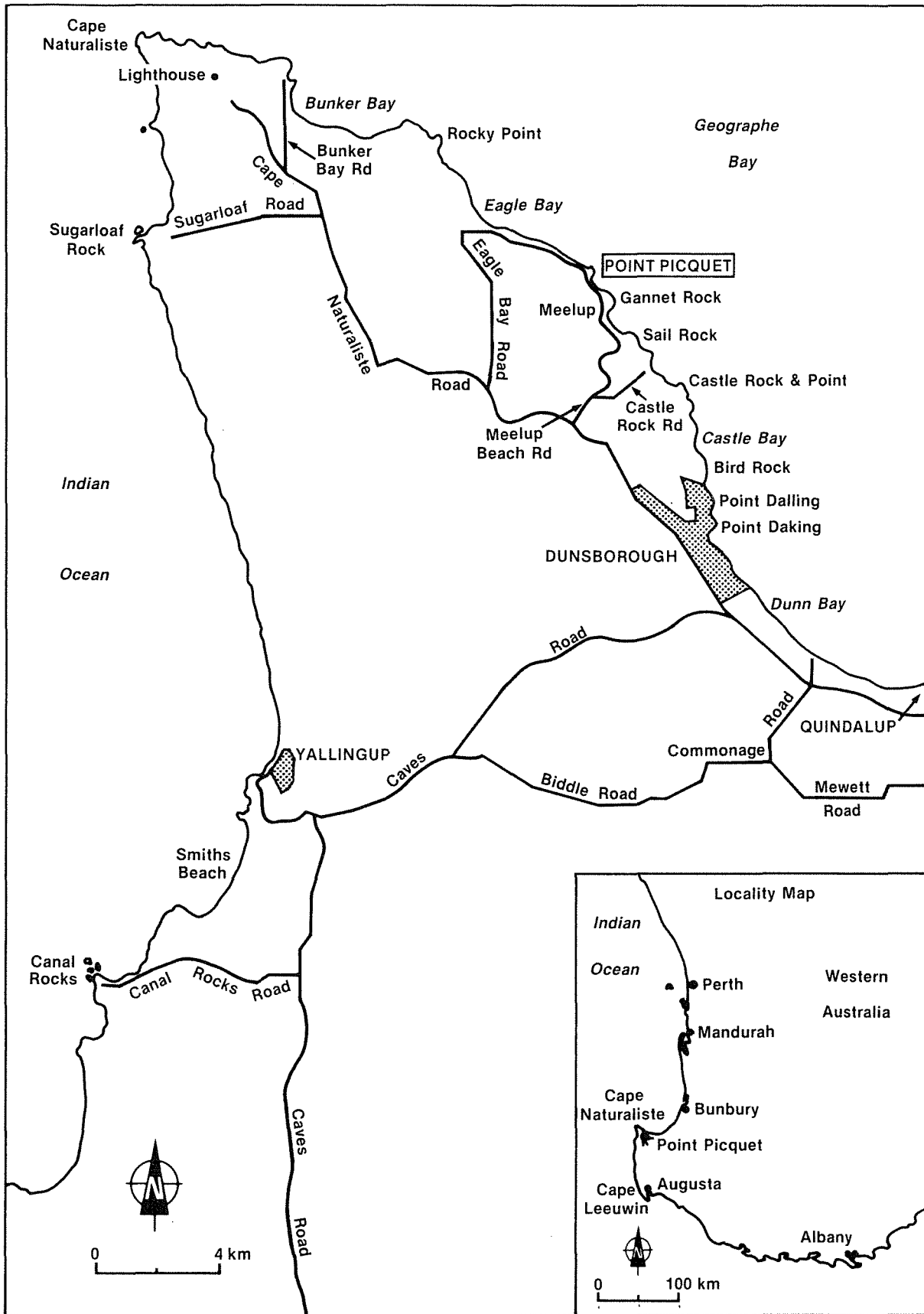


Figure 1 Location Map

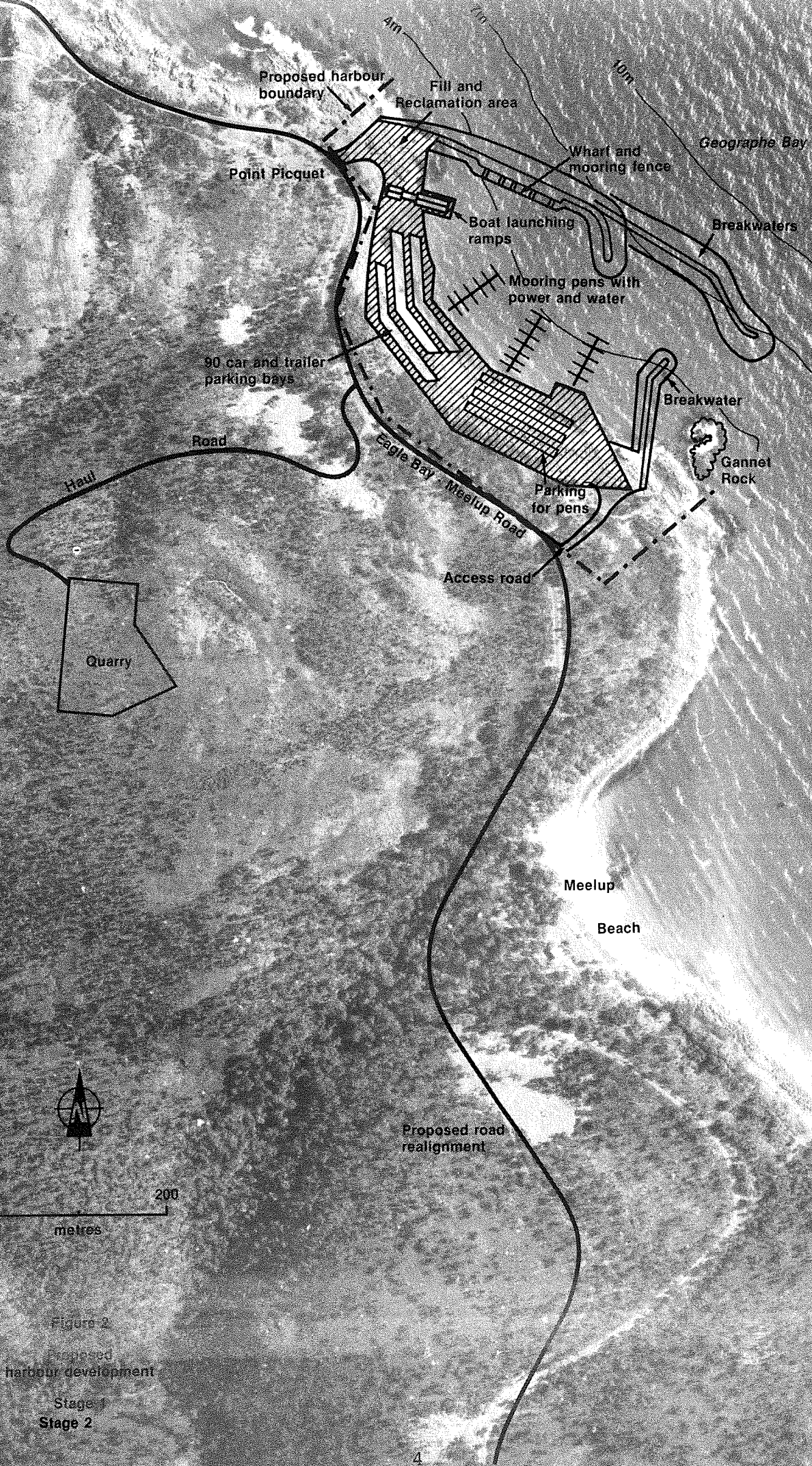


Figure 2
 Proposed
 harbour development
 Stage 1
 Stage 2

Infrastructure : . additional reticulated water supply

3.3 LAND TENURE

The proposal at Point Picquet would be located within 'C' class Reserve 21629 vested in the Shire of Busselton for parkland purposes. Land required from the reserve would be:

- . 5.0 hectares for the harbour (1.8 hectares would be provided from reclamation) to be vested in the Minister for Transport; and
- . 3.9 hectares for the quarry reserve, to be vested in the Minister for Transport; and
- . 2.0 hectares for the road reserve for the haul road (assuming a 30 metre wide road reserve); and
- . additional land would be required for improving access through Meelup. This would be the responsibility of the Shire of Busselton.

4. NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

When investigations into the siting of a harbour in the Dunsborough area commenced the prime requirement was to provide support to the local developing fishing industry to facilitate "maximum exploitation" of the fishery. A second consideration was a need to have a safe harbour of refuge in the Cape Naturaliste-Geographe Bay area.

Although there is some uncertainty about the growth potential of the commercial fishery, there is a publicly perceived need for a harbour facility. It has also become apparent that there is an increasing demand for recreational facilities, in particular for sheltered launch ramps close to Busselton.

The demand for a facility somewhere on Geographe Bay, to satisfy the needs of professional fishermen and the boating public is evident. However the ideal location for a facility has not been determined.

5. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The ERMP provided some background to indicate what alternative sites had been considered. There was a preference not to locate a structure on the sandy coastline because of possible expensive maintenance dredging costs. As a consequence, investigations have been focused on the rocky coast between Cape Naturaliste and Dunsborough with each major bay having received some consideration as a potential site at some stage during the investigations phase (see Figure 1). The Authority indicates that it considers that more

attention should have been given to other important aspects such as planning implications, aesthetics and provision of infrastructure and support facilities.

6. SUBMISSIONS ON THE PROPOSAL

Public review of the ERMP closed on 29 July 1985. A total of 86 submissions was received, some of which had multiple authors. Many of the submissions were of a particularly high standard, and of considerable length.

An additional 52 letters opposing the project were also received. These were not specifically in response to the ERMP. One petition was received containing 2060 signatures, opposing the construction of any facility on the rocky coast between Dunsborough and Cape Naturaliste and seeking to have the whole area made into a National Park. One petition containing 206 signatures in favour of the proposal was received. In addition, 173 signed tear-off slips from a newspaper advertisement opposing the project were received.

The Authority wishes to record here its appreciation of all persons and organisations who made submissions.

Of the 86 submissions, 61 were opposed to the development of the Point Picquet site, 13 were in favour of a harbour at the location, and 12 did not indicate a preference. A broad geographic breakdown of the submission authorship and type is shown in Table 1.

The major issues raised in public and Government submissions are summarised in Appendix A.

Table 1. Geographic Origin Of Submissions and Submission Signatories by Type of Submission Received

<u>Type of Submission</u>	<u>Submissions</u>	<u>Signatures</u>
Local area (Bunbury to Margaret River)	39	80
Local organisations with multiple membership	10	10
Perth Metropolitan area	18	24
Metropolitan organisations	4	4
State Government	10	10
Other	5	6
TOTAL	<u>86</u>	<u>134</u>

7. ISSUES AND ASSESSMENT

The issues raised by consideration of this proposal fall into two major categories, namely issues or impacts that are manageable (for example water quality), and issues related to the planning incongruity of an isolated development in a location of intrinsic natural beauty. There is a strongly felt, and reasonable desire of the local community to contain development within a framework which is in harmony with the desirable natural features of the area.

A broad-scale planning strategy for the region would be a most desirable precursor to harbour development.

The absence of a regional environmental planning framework within which to examine the proposal was of fundamental concern to the Authority because, without such a plan, there is a risk that ad hoc decisions made on development proposals would seriously detract from the intrinsic values of the rocky coastline and in the long term militate against realisation of its full potential as a regional resource. The Authority is informed that there is progress towards such a plan.

There appears to be strong public feeling about the value of the rocky coast in the Cape Naturaliste area and a desire to retain its present appearance. If boating facilities are to be provided anywhere on the rocky coast this should follow a public consultation process in which all alternatives (including siting facilities on the sandy coast) are canvassed.

It would be desirable to choose a properly planned location which would accommodate relevant shore-based facilities. There is agreement from all interest groups that the provision of facilities like restaurants, chandleries, petrol stations etc would not be appropriate at the Point Picquet site and yet these facilities are all desirable elements of a harbour development.

In view of the above, and specifically in the context of this assessment, the Authority believes that a boat harbour should not be constructed at Point Picquet because of the outstanding natural beauty of the area and the desirability of maintaining the features of that beauty. The Authority therefore recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The EPA recommends that a broad regional plan be completed prior to the establishment of boating facilities on Geographe Bay. The plan should identify potential sites for a boat harbour (and other facilities) that are compatible with the objectives of the plan, that will accommodate appropriate infrastructure and that will meet the needs of the professional fishermen and the boating public.

RECOMMENDATION 2

In the absence of a regional plan, the EPA recommends that a boat harbour should not be constructed at Point Picquet.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Following consideration of the Dunsborough Boat Harbour ERMP and the content of submissions received, the EPA has reached a number of conclusions. These conclusions are:

1. The EPA notes that there is a perceived need for a boat harbour facility in the Geographe Bay area. This perception is felt across a range of potential users.
2. The EPA notes that the Department of Marine and Harbours has indicated that the rocky shore of Point Picquet has physical attractions as a boat harbour location because there is an engineering preference not to locate such a structure on the sandy coastline because of possible expensive maintenance dredging costs.
3. Notwithstanding the above, the EPA believes that a boat harbour should not be constructed at Point Picquet because of:
 - the outstanding natural beauty of the area and the desirability of maintaining the features of that beauty;
 - the impacts of the improved access which would be required through Meelup;
 - the desirability of choosing a properly planned location where it would be appropriate to locate the relevant shore-based facilities. Facilities like restaurants, chandleries, petrol stations etc would not be appropriate at the Point Picquet site, and it may not be logical to build a harbour without providing such associated backup facilities;
4. There appears to be an urgent need for a regional environmental plan for the area, one feature of which could be to determine the most appropriate place on Geographe Bay to site a boat harbour;
5. There is a need to institute a search for the most appropriate location for a boat harbour that will be compatible with regional planning objectives and also meet the needs of the professional fishermen, the boating public, and which can accommodate the appropriate infrastructure;

6. There would be merit in investigating if the perceived need for a boat harbour could be achieved by combining the various proposals for the region in a single facility.

APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OF MAJOR ISSUES RAISED IN WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

- . there is a lack of demonstrated need for a harbour for professional fishermen;
- . a public facility is being provided ostensibly for the fishing industry, but actually for a privileged minority of wealthy large boat owners;
- . the nature of the actual demand for boating facilities has not been ascertained, nor has the most appropriate location (based on a broad range of criteria);
- . there is a fear that the facility will be lost for good if the Shire of Busselton does not accept the Pt Picquet proposal;

FISHING INDUSTRY ISSUES

- . there is no justification for the development because the local fishery is fully exploited with the exception of pilchards and a possible offshore trawl fishery, the value of the pilchard fishery does not warrant a harbour;
- . twelve of (sixteen?) local professional fishermen are opposed to the facility, but want a more modest unloading facility elsewhere (on the soft coast);
- . the proposed harbour will only be able to accommodate boats of less than 22 m length, boats larger than this would be needed for an offshore trawl fishery, and they could operate from Bunbury;
- . local fishermen are concerned about disturbance of fish schools by increased boat traffic, increased competition from other professional fishermen moving into the area and lack of winter resting of fishing grounds;
- . a harbour will not significantly increase productivity of the fishery, only the convenience of two local pilchard fishermen;
- . the local fishery is effectively already closed, as the Department of Fisheries will not issue any new licences;
- . the existence of the harbour, leading to increased usage of the local waters will hasten decline of fish stocks.

PLANNING, AESTHETIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

- . the beauty and tranquil atmosphere of the area will be destroyed by any development which attracts heavy recreational or commercial road and/or boat traffic;
- . there is strong public support for a comprehensive management plan for the whole Cape area, and that such

a plan should be done prior to any further development in the area;

- . the whole Cape area should be declared a National Park;
- . there will be irresistible pressures from entrepreneurs to establish other facilities associated with a boat harbour at Point Picquet, and a strong likelihood of ribbon development along the upgraded access road;
- . increased road traffic will decrease amenity and public safety in the vicinity of Meelup Beach;
- . increased boat traffic and pollution from the harbour will reduce the amenity of Meelup Beach, encourage sharks into nearshore waters, endanger passive marine recreational activities (eg snorkelling);
- . the proposal in the ERMP specifically excludes the provision of adequate infrastructure from the harbour precinct, such as a store for supplying visiting boats, a restaurant and public toilets. Such a poorly serviced harbour would be a waste of public funds;
- . Aboriginal heritage issues have not been considered;
- . straightening of the access road will reduce the attractiveness of views, and the harbour itself will be unattractive;
- . Urban and Environmental Planning Group's plan for the Rural Landowners Association (partly funded by the Shire of Busselton and the SWDA) should be considered prior to making a decision on the Point Picquet harbour.

HARBOUR DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT, MARINE IMPACTS

- . there is concern that the present design of the harbour is inadequate, that its breakwater will be overtopped by solid waves in extreme storms, that entry or exit to the harbour will be hazardous in NE-N-NW seas and that the wave climate in the harbour will be unsuitable;
- . there is concern that no sites have been specified for the dumping of maintenance dredge spoil;
- . the phase 2 harbour will have a significantly lower flushing rate than the phase 1 harbour, and that as a result harbour water quality will be inadequate;
- . the presence of the harbour will increase the frequency of marine emergencies because the amount of local boating activity will increase;
- . poor quality water and litter from the boat harbour will pollute and reduce the amenity of Meelup Beach;

TERRESTRIAL IMPACTS

- upgrading of the road is inadequately addressed in the ERMP, and road upgrading would be unnecessary if the harbour was not located at Point Picquet;
- dieback disease will be spread by earthworks associated with upgrading of the Dunsborough-Meelup road and construction of the quarry access road;
- realignment of the access road higher up Meelup Brook will result in the loss of a magnificent, peppermint-shaded valley of historical importance;
- the quarry will endanger a presently unmapped population of the rare plant Calothamnus graniticus;
- further damage to coastal vegetation in the vicinity of the harbour will occur from increased human use, vandalism, and construction of the facility itself;
- the quarry will create a visual scar and is an unsuitable land use for the reserve.