

Ferry figures don't add up

BY MARTELLE LOVE

THE BELLARINE Ferry Group has questioned State Government figures into proposed commuter ferry services on Port Phillip bay.

Recently recent figures from the government suggest the cost of purchasing a ferry to service a route from Portarlington to Melbourne would be \$7million.

Ferry group treasurer, Geoff Henderson, said this figure is more than \$2million above a quote they have received.

"One of the queries we have got is that we have a firm quote for under \$5million for the boat, which makes a significant difference to the cost," Henderson said.

"If we had that corrected, it would be significant. We would like to sit down with the consultant and try to clarify it, and we are trying to organise that at the moment."

In response to costing, a Department of Transport

spokesperson said "the consultant report on proposed commuter ferry services prepared for the Victorian Transport Plan was a high-level desktop study that provided indicative costings only".

Henderson, however, is confident the report findings mean the ferry service is a step closer to being part of the Portarlington Safe Harbour, which he said has the place for two 300-capacity ferries in the plan.

"The consultant's report says Portarlington is the better option than Geelong. It's the first time we've had a government report really support the proposed route, which is good," he said.

"It always helps your case, because it is not just a community group, but a government-sponsored report saying it is potentially viable.

"We believe that it is up for costing now and ready for budget submission for the upcoming financial year with the state



Bellarine Ferry Group members John Rae and Geoff Henderson.

government, and then I think it would be a two or three year project. "And we would be interested in talking to Parks Victoria and the Department of Transport to do something in the interim because there is such a demand and requirement for it."

The government report estimates travel time from Portarlington to Spencer Street at 76 minutes, although Henderson said the ferry group believed the time would be 70 minutes with the light rail service synchronised with the ferry timetable.

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Two Barwon bridges 'a disaster'

THE CITY of Greater Geelong's Planning Portfolio holder, councillor Andrew Katos, will tonight put forward a motion asking council to reaffirm its support for a single bridge at Barwon Heads.

Katos' motion will also ask members of the Legislative Council to reject the State Government's plans to build two bridges between Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads.

"If it was a 50/50 split of support

you could say the government has to make a tough decision, but the plan to build two bridges at Barwon Heads has utterly no community support. I'm calling for the all opposition parties to vote this down," he said.

Katos said he even invited members of the government to cross the floor to ensure the proposal didn't go ahead and described having two bridges at Barwon Heads a disaster for the town.

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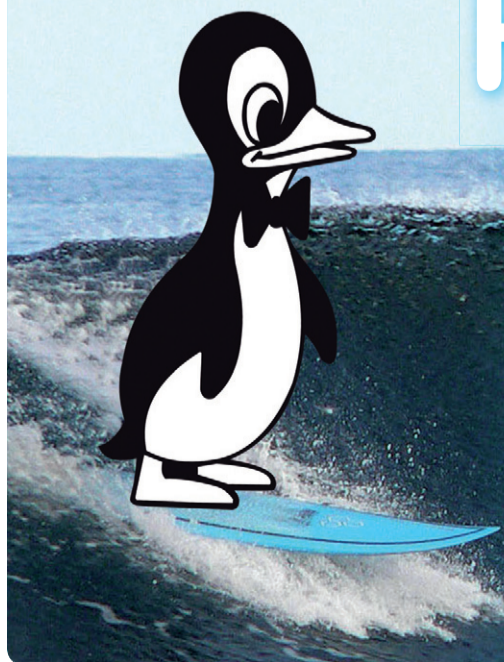
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