



The Paleontological Society



PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON THE THREATENED BEAUMARIS FOSSIL SITE

The following is a statement by President Steven M. Holland on behalf of the Paleontological Society.

The Beaumaris fossil site has been recognized for over a century as providing an unparalleled view of the marine life in Australia from 4.3 to 5.0 million years ago. Fossils of whales, seals, penguins, giant toothed seabirds, turtles, sharks, fishes, and many kinds of marine invertebrates have all been found here. Fossils of land-dwelling mammals have also been found, including giant kangaroo, wallaby, and wombat bones.

When such well-preserved fossils and rocks of a particular period of geologic time are found, paleontologists and geologists designate such outcrops as type localities of that time period. The Beaumaris site is the type locality of the Cheltenhamian Stage, and it is internationally important standard for rocks of this age. For over a century, paleontologists from around the world have traveled to Beaumaris to study its fossils, and new species continue to be discovered there.

The importance of the Beaumaris site has been recognized by the State Government of Victoria, which has designated it a Class 1 site with "highest priority given to maintaining exposure of the fossil beds in the cliff and in the near shore area". The site has also been placed on the Register of the National Estate at the nomination of the Bayside City Council.

The expansion of Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron facilities threatens this important fossil site. The proposed seawall and building will cover large portions of the site, rendering them permanently inaccessible. The expansion of the marina will also limit public access to the site and threaten the study of what remains after construction. Finally, construction and subsequent pollution from the marina will cause significant damage to the marine environment, which lies adjacent to a marine sanctuary.

We are concerned about the expansion of the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron facilities and the irreparable damage it will cause to the Beaumaris fossil site. Sites like Beaumaris are a unique part of Australia's natural heritage, and they need to be preserved.

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