

## Fossils or bay filling at Beaumaris?

**The high sandstone cliff and adjoining seabed at Beaumaris on Port Phillip Bay have become a new battleground against inappropriate and excessive coastal development.**

The fossils found along this shoreline are famous and have allowed scientists to create a picture of the area's marine life from six million years ago.

Giant penguins, dugongs, whales, sharks, corals, sea urchins, crabs and seals were then all part of the local marine environment. In 2014, the discovery of sea turtle fossils filled a huge gap in the history of Australian reptiles.

The Beaumaris Cliff and its offshore reefs make up Australia's richest marine animal fossil site, and also contain the remains of terrestrial animals washed down the ancient Yarra River. This rare mix is famous around the world.

You'd think that such an important site would have been protected years ago.

Not so. The richest part of the site has already been covered by a hectare of filling.

Now Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron Ltd has much more grandiose plans.

It has applied to build a 120-berth all-weather marina, an 88-metre long storage

*Beaumaris Bay will be further damaged by the yacht squadron's grandiose plans.*



PHOTO COURTESY GEOFFREY GOODE

shed for power boats next to and as high as the Cliff, a replacement club house, more parking and more boat ramps, burying much more of this unique fossil site under tonnes of filling.

The local community, and scientists from around the world, continue to voice their concerns about this plan, but it just won't go away.

Such a ludicrous proposal should never have been allowed to advance this far. It shows the environmental risks created when self-interested groups are given control over what is publicly-owned foreshore and seabed.

The Victorian Government should reject the company's massive expansion plans, and at the same time announce that any

renewal of the 21-year lease expiring in 2018 must entail a binding timetable to phase out its occupancy. It should also support the community's recent nomination for Beaumaris Bay to be added to Australia's National Heritage List.

The Beaumaris Fossil Site has enormous potential for a fossil museum, on-site or nearby, that would appeal to visitors from around the world.

Scientists have already shared such a vision. All it needs now is a government with the political will and commitment to realise it. • PW

For more information, see [www.bcs.asn.au](http://www.bcs.asn.au)

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