

Skate park a priority project'

■ Tim Slater



The Shire of Esperance is set to consider a bid to allocate \$90,000 to fund "necessary and urgent repairs" at the skate park as a "priority project" and to start planning for a new one at its meeting next Tuesday.

In a report to the council, community services director Rod Hilton said the facility needed "immediate repairs" for it to remain open until a long-term plan could be determined for users.

"Council is also obligated to ensure its facilities are safe and fit for purpose," Mr Hilton said.

Earlier this year the council received a deputation from a concerned parent Leanne Johnson, and a number of youths, including Tristan Kingma and Corry Johnson, about the facility's sub-standard condition and potential risk of injury to users.

"Councillors subsequently inspected the facility," Mr Hilton said.

"Some remedial repairs to fill cracks in the concrete basin and walls were undertaken to reduce the risk of injury to users."

Skate park designer Convic was engaged to assess and report on the condition of the park in March.

The Convic report rated the skate park was in a poor condition and had less than five years of life remaining.

The report recommended that the shire plan and budget for a major upgrade or replacement; implement a specific maintenance plan and determine; implement annual maintenance budgets and develop a graffiti removal strategy.

It said the new facility would be designed as a regional scale facility that was "more in line with council's vision and could be sited on the foreshore".

"This option will also provide council with a purpose built facility according to best practice for skate and youth facility design with a design life of 15-20 years," the report said.

Mr Hilton said the council had had several

informal briefings on the future of the park since receiving the report.

Issues raised included the immediate and long term maintenance requirements; needs of current and future users; potential risks and concerns; asset management impacts and appropriate location.

"During the Local Government Week Conference in August several councillors and staff visited the recently constructed Joondalup Skate Park, costing approximately \$750,000, as an indication of a new and modern skate park, meeting multi user needs, including Skate Boards, skaters, scooters and BMX," Mr Hilton said.

"Council staff have subsequently had discussions with several skate park contractors, and received a quote of \$50,000-\$60,000 to effect the necessary works to keep the skate park operational.

"One company has also offered to provide concept planning and site assessment for a replacement facility, if engaged to refurbish the skate park."

He said the current maintenance budget was \$25,000 which only covered cleaning and minor repairs. Mr Hilton said the council would need to urgently progress the design of a replacement facility at its existing location or another location.

"It is important that the users of the facility are consulted, any design will meet current and future needs, and appropriate funding can be sourced," he said.

"These issues cannot be determined currently, however council can direct the administration to progress this project, so potentially the skate park's future can be incorporated in council's corporate, long term financial and asset management plans, and possibly considered for next year's budget."

Mr Hilton said the plan would cost about \$30,000 to complete if the council was looking at similar skate parks at Joondalup and Kalgoorlie.

He said quotations for repairs ranged from \$51,000 - \$175,000, depending on the extent of concrete work involved.

"Council staff believe \$60,000 would be satisfactory to resolve the immediate issues," he said.



Hanging by a thread: One of the rotting pilons on the tanker jetty.

Photo: SHIRE OF ESPERANCE

Chance to discuss condition of jetty

■ Tim Slater

Damaged parts of the tanker jetty will be on display next week as part of a new campaign being launched by the Shire of Esperance to share information about the condition of the ageing facility.

Shire of Esperance president Malcolm Heasman said a community sausage sizzle morning will be held next Saturday for people to talk to councillors and staff about the jetty.

"Retrieved parts of the tanker jetty will be on display as well as photos showing some of the damaged parts that need work before public access can safely be

restored," Cr Heasman said.

One of the photos shows damage to a pile that supports the jetty and how little of it remains due to rot.

"This will be the first of several events where councillors and shire officers will be available to discuss the existing condition of the jetty and upcoming community engagement opportunities," Cr Heasman said.

Models of the waterfront artwork being created by local artists Cindy Poole and Jason Wooldridge will also be on display.

The event will be held on September 28 at the James Street shade shelter from 10am-12pm.

Building cultural bridges

■ Tim Slater

Aboriginal culture was shared with children from three Esperance primary schools at the Wongutha campus on Thursday during Naidoc Week.

Wongutha teacher and board member Harry Graham said the event provided an opportunity to acknowledge Aboriginal people.

"We give thanks to our leaders past and present for the struggle they went through many years ago to make things right," he said.

"Our people have still got a long way to go."

Mr Graham said young people had an important ongoing role in building bridges between the different cultures.

"You guys are the next leaders, you will be part of the community and if we can break down those barriers at an early age things will be better in the future," he said.

Mr Graham encouraged Wongutha students to be proud of their identity.



Welcome to country: Aboriginal leaders Sonny and Harry Graham welcome Esperance primary school students to the Naidoc celebrations at Wongutha on Thursday.

"You come from a very long, historical race of Aboriginal people who have been here for many thousands of years," he said.

Students from the Esperance Christian Primary School, Castletown Primary School and Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School took part in the activities, including face painting, making damper, hand painting and spear throwing.

The Wongutha rock band entertained the visitors during lunch.

Aboriginal elder Sonny Graham opened the official opening singing We Are Australian in English and in Nyoongar.

The Ngadju Dancers from Norseman also entertained the crowd with three dances; a war dance, welcome dance and Old Man Emu dance.

Yesterday, year eight stu-

dents from the Esperance Anglican Community School visited the school to celebrate Naidoc week.

■ See Monday's paper for more pictures from the event.



Old man emu: The Ngadju Dancers from Norseman perform an Old Man Emu dance at the official opening of Naidoc celebrations at Wongutha. Photos: TIM SLATER

Service cut to affect tourism

■ Tim Slater

A decision to stop the Ravenshorpe to Albany public bus service is a "short-sighted" move that will impact on the number of tourists, particularly backpackers and baby boomers, visiting the region, according to a leading regional tourism figure.

Last week TransWA announced that the service will cease on December 26, along with another service between Hopetoun and Ravenshorpe.

A TransWA spokesperson said the decision was made following "consistently poor patronage with on average each service carrying fewer than three passengers per journey".

But Australia's Golden Outback chief executive officer Jac Eerbeek said the move would cut an important tourist link between Esperance and Albany.

"The idea that a vital transport link from Albany leading to Esperance is being closed is very short sighted" Mr Eerbeek said.

"Just at a time when baby boomers are retiring in massive numbers and will want to use their concessional passes for intrastate holidays, TransWA closes a vital section on

what once was one of the most popular retiree holiday routes, Perth to Albany then onto Esperance and returning to Perth via Kalgoorlie."

He said in other parts of the world public transport services had monthly tourist passes which cost \$99.

"TransWA don't have these which is a real pity because a round trip from Perth via Albany, Esperance and Kalgoorlie would no doubt be most popular amongst the backpacker market bringing more backpacker tourists into Esperance and Kalgoorlie," he said.

The move also follows extensive plans by development commissions, tourism bodies and councils along the south coast over the past two years to promote the Great South West Edge Landscape holiday route.

"While these organisations are developing new reasons for travelling the southern coastal route, the accountants in TransWA have decided one option you won't have to travel the Great South West Edge, is on TransWA services," he said.

"We are calling on TransWA to immediately reconsider its closure of this potentially vital tourism transport link, between Albany and Esperance."