

Councillor Column

Coastal Management – Cr Lara McIntyre

Often photos of Esperance feature striking timber stairways leading down to one of our beautiful beaches. It is so easy to forget how it all looked a few years back. In 2014 Council endorsed a Coastal Management Plan that identified the priority areas on our coastline for protection and enhancement, with an implementation schedule to undertake these works.

The Plan highlighted that most of our coastal facilities and campsites were run down and access points to our best beaches was often unsafe, causing damage to fragile dune systems. Since undertaking the Coastal Management Plan, a mere 4 years ago, an amazing amount of work has been achieved. It is a true credit to the small staff team involved who have been resourceful in turning a humble budget into over \$800,000 of coastal work in our Shire.

The Coastal Management Plan was the essential element in attracting funding. Funding bodies were able to see that we had a long-term vision and that the Shire of Esperance would use their funds strategically rather than in an ad hoc and reactive manner.

Now, not only do most of our most popular beaches have fantastic stairs and viewing platforms, but also planted and protected fore dunes are common. Campsites such as Munglinup and Quagi have had major upgrades to camping and day-use areas, attracting praise from visitors and locals alike. If you haven't been to Quagi in a while I would encourage you to head out there, the campsite facilities are excellent and the stairs with a viewing platform are sensational.

In a recent study, run by Tourism WA, it was found that at the top of the must-do list for international visitors are coastal experiences. The investment the Shire has made into our coastal facilities is a direct investment into Esperance's tourism experience. Obviously it is not only for visitors, our Community Strategic Plan highlights the importance that locals place on protecting our coastal environment for sustainable recreational and economic use.

The other key to the success of the plan's implementation has been the team's commitment to work with coastal communities and partners such as South Coast NRM, South Coast Management Group and other community groups who have all contributed and continue to contribute, to ensure that locals and visitors will be able to enjoy our beautiful coastline into the future.