

Councillor Column

By Shire President Victoria Brown

In response to Tony Bright's letter from Friday 15 September 2017, 'Jetty collapse flawed, not fatal.' Council is committed to providing a recreational jetty for our community. What Council is not prepared to do is place a financial millstone around the necks of the Esperance Community by committing to restore at any cost. Council has repeatedly stated it can afford a \$6 million capital spend. The \$6 million includes \$1 million in reserves, a \$1 million loan, and \$4 million funding. Ongoing maintenance costs for this \$6 million project are funded within the current long term financial plan with no additional rates increase.

Council is NOT hiding information. ALL information is easily accessible on the Shire website albeit lengthy and technical. We have always been open and transparent, right from the 2011 decision on the jetty. Council struggled with the decision to demolish and replace, but it was a financially responsible solution.

Council has never said the jetty can't be restored, but capital and ongoing maintenance costs are unaffordable. We have seen no sound financial plan for a \$6 million restoration that will last for 50 years. In Mr Bright's letter; he states "Professional marine engineers have shown conclusively the structure can be remediated for less than \$6 M." This report has never been forwarded to Council or made available to the community for public review. Who would be undertaking the work? How would this remediation occur? What is the expected life span of the works? Have project management and insurance costs been included within this amount? What will be the ongoing maintenance expectations?

We meet with the Heritage Council next week to discuss their concerns. The advice received from them over the last few months and our subsequent proposal has been the cause of much speculation and interpretation. What is clear is that we are still working with the Heritage Council to provide our community with a recreational jetty.

Mr Bright calls on me as the Shire President "to cease blaming the State Government for what has happened" and to "take responsibility for the situation we all now face." I have never blamed the State Government or past Councils for what has happened. Looking backwards and blaming past decisions and the handling of the jetty won't help us move forward. We are in the 'here and now' and meeting with the Heritage Council next week will hopefully make things a lot clearer.