

FROM THE COAST

Ideas Exchange with Albany

Deputy Shire President Cr Natalie Bowman

A small group of Shire of Esperance Councillors and Executive Staff recently visited the City of Albany to see how things are done in a bigger town.

As we begin to talk to our community about our Strategic Community Plan it was good to see what a bigger community has to look after and to get some ideas that we could use for Esperance. We both face balancing the expectations of a diverse community with conflicting needs and wants.

It is good to occasionally get out of our own backyard and develop relationships with other local governments along the south coast. While Albany may be bigger they have some very similar issues to us and are exploring different solutions.

Communication was a hot topic of conversation and we were able to compare notes about what each of us had tried, the levels of success we've had and we were able to take home some new ideas. What is very clear is that we are both trying hard to engage with our respective communities on different levels.

One reoccurring topic of discussion was tourism as a potential economy driver. Both Albany and Esperance want to find a place in the tourism market. Albany is targeting Perth and are rebranding themselves as the Amazing South Coast. They are forming alliances with surrounding local governments and working together to attract funding and develop their marketing campaign. It certainly got me thinking-where is Esperance in all that? We have many visitors coming from across the Nullabor and from overseas. Do we want to be part of the Amazing South Coast and can we work together to attract tourists from both ends to enjoy the entire south coast? How does our community need to change to accommodate tourism?

Another similarity we share with Albany is Asset Management. We both have to assess what we have, what we need and how this will best serve the community. Albany has recently opened a football stadium which is a high class facility that allows two football clubs to share one building resulting in less financial pressure on the clubs and a better football experience for the community.

This experience was a great exchange of ideas and we have invited Albany to visit us in the future. Ultimately, while Esperance and Albany may have different sizes, we both share similar issues and we look forward to further developing our relationship and working together to achieve more.