

## Councillor Column

### Dempster Head

What a pleasant surprise to read the Draft Dempster Head Management Plan. While I have always appreciated the natural beauty, walks and views in this area I had no idea just what a unique jewel it is for Esperance. It turns out this small area is like a sample pot of different Esperance environments. Dempster Head boasts a whole range of diverse vegetation communities and is rich with different plant species.

How cool is it to have that on the very doorstep of our town and, as the study suggests, what an excellent opportunity for a “Kings Park” style eco-tourism asset for Esperance?

However, it's not all about plants; the draft plan also highlights the equally diverse community values and uses of the area,

... and there lies the challenge!

How do we continue to enjoy a beautiful environment and not spoil what is special about it? Luckily, the very aim of this Management Plan is to help solve this challenge. It investigates the ways in which we like to use Dempster Head, the capacity of the area to cope with different activities and then recommends a list of management actions the Shire can take to improve the way the area is looked after and used. The draft was developed by South Coast Natural Resource Management with input from many different users of the reserve.

Most of the actions are simple such as better signage, rehabilitating eroded areas and defining trails more clearly so that walkers, sightseers, photographers and many others can enjoy the area without creating more damage.

Mountain biking, currently prohibited on Dempster Head, was assessed using the WA Mountain Bike Guidelines and this activity is proving to be more problematic. The plan identified a high risk of injury to both riders and walkers, a very high risk of erosion due to the steepness and soil type and a likely requirement for an environmental impact assessment as just some of the challenges associated with this activity.

Right at this moment, no decisions have been made about Dempster Head. Council is seeking your feedback on the Draft Dempster Head Management Plan 2018 and the recommended actions before the draft is endorsed. I would encourage anyone who uses or cares about this area to provide feedback by making a submission in writing addressed to the CEO and returning by post, hand delivery or in an email to [shire@esperance.wa.gov.au](mailto:shire@esperance.wa.gov.au) before 4pm, Friday 27 April.