

## Councillor Column

### Growing Industry

For nearly 25 years Cliffs has been using the Port of Esperance and making a huge commitment to our community. Originally Portman Mining, Cliffs Resources has been a valuable contributor to our community for far longer than originally planned, providing support to community projects and sponsorship. With the announcement that they will cease operations by the end of 2018 we acknowledge this will be a significant loss for our community.

Cliffs was responsible for funding the Sims Street Bridge and has provided many jobs for the Esperance community. Cliffs has supported projects and events such as the Kids Fun Day Out and Festival of the Wind; as well as local clubs and groups including the Esperance Bay Yacht Club, Cannery Arts Centre and a wide variety of education programs.

Although winding up of their operations has not come as a surprise, it is still disappointing news to hear. We met with Cliffs' representatives last week to discuss how we can assist each other with their departure from the town and operations within Australia.

Cliffs' departure provides an opportunity for potential new players in the market to explore potential operations through the Port of Esperance. The Shire has recently had several discussions with the office of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, contacting me to say that the Minister for Regional Development, Alannah MacTiernan is keen to visit Esperance to discuss new job opportunities and potential industries. The Shire has also been talking with Hon Darren West MLC, Member for Agricultural Region, Hon Kyle McGinn MLC, Member for Mining and Pastoral Region; and Hon Colin De Grussa MLC, member for Agricultural Region; about the impacts of Cliffs moving on and what we as a collective can do to boost jobs and investment in our community.

Encouraging new industries to town is a challenge so we are working with stakeholders and agencies on ways to move forward. Our new Town Planning Scheme is flexible and attractive for new industry providing a reduction in red tape whilst ensuring industry is located appropriately.

Business investment and new employment opportunities are topics that continue to dominate conversations and are identified in our Strategic Community Plan 2017-2027. With Cliffs' announcement we have some new challenges to face. It may take some time to iron out the kinks; however we have many potential investment opportunities to look forward to.