

Councillor Column

Cr Natalie Bowman, Chair of Jetty Replacement Working Group.

Here I am again talking about the jetty. When having conversations out and about talking with people I often hear 'now I understand, I didn't realise that', so I have decided to run through how we got to this position.

When I joined council in 2011 the decision had been made that the jetty was past its useful life and it would not be financially viable for the Shire to continue to maintain it, rather fiscally responsible to begin to plan for its replacement. Did we as a new group of Councillors challenge that decision? Absolutely! We examined all the reports, asked all the questions and came up the same answer; the cost to restore/repair would be approximately \$11-14 million with a lot of unknowns and high risk involved. At the same time our community was asking us to keep the rates low and our State Government was directing us down a sustainability and asset management path.

In addition to everything else, we had been underspending on our assets for many years, a common problem amongst local governments. As a group we began to plan the way out of this situation, which is now the 10 year financial plan you will hear about, and greatly increased spending on asset maintenance, particularly the area with the biggest gap - roads. During this time, did we stop spending on the jetty? No, we kept patching and repairing with the aim of keeping it open and functioning until we were in a position to replace.

From 2013 to 2015 we began to work on the jetty replacement, holding many workshops and information sessions. Our community told us they wanted a replacement in the same location, in the same curved shape and ideally the same length.

In November 2015 following more structural assessments the tough decision was made to close the jetty permanently due to the public safety risk. We were also informed of the risk of collapse and danger to water users and that it would be best if we dismantled the jetty to allow retention of the wood for heritage interpretation and other non-structural uses.

We immediately began working with the Heritage Council to determine what we needed to do to be able to dismantle the jetty and replace it. The Heritage council asked us to do 4 things prior to demolition, which we completed and were accepted by the Heritage Council. In February 2016 at a public meeting, Council called for tenders for demolition.

August 2016 Council was ready to accept a demolition tender of \$1.5M, but in response to requests from the 'Save the Tanker Jetty Group' resolved to delay the demolition to allow the group to offer a sustainable and viable alternative.

November 2016 following examination of the presented 'Bonacci report', Council determined that the costs and risks were too high and to continue with the demolition and replacement of the Tanker Jetty. That night, a stop work order was issued, by the Minister, which subsequently became a conservation order and required us to work with the Heritage Council to develop a plan for replacement that they were satisfied with and secure funding for the replacement prior to demolition.

Since November 2016 we have held many meetings and discussions with the Heritage Council to determine what they wanted in a replacement jetty. The advice we received both formally, and informally, directed us to build a jetty that is iconic, that is not a replica of the old one, that does not

mix old and new materials, and that retains some original material in situ. We were informed there was to be no confusion between what is old and what is new. They did not accept our desired 400m replacement jetty length, but rather directed us to reduce the new length and leave more of the old piles in place.

Now here we are 13 months on from the decision to issue the demolition tender, with a collapsing Tanker Jetty, a replacement proposal guided by Heritage Council that doesn't satisfy them, and the 'Friends of the Jetty' group asking us to again consider alternatives which we still have not received. All the while we are spending our limited funds picking up the pieces as they fall into the ocean. We have visual confirmation, based on the pieces recovered from the collapse that the timbers are in a worse condition than our reports stated.

As I write this I am keenly awaiting the visit from the Heritage Council so that I can ask why their advice appears to have changed direction and why they now seem to be directing us towards building a replica jetty like Busselton, which we were initially told not to do. (And cost \$24m) To date, since August 2016, we have spent \$192,380.39 on concept design, heritage consultation and cleanup of debris.

We have planned an achievable \$6m spend on a replacement jetty, of which we have \$2M secured and we cannot apply for funding for the shortfall until we have a Heritage Council approved plan. We are slowly but surely draining our demolition funds every time more of the jetty collapses and our community continues to be frustrated and angry.

I sincerely hope that by the time you read this, we will have met with the Heritage Council and will have an agreed way forward so that we can continue on our way towards getting our community a jetty that can be accessed and enjoyed by locals and tourists alike.