

## FROM THE COAST

### Determining Community Priorities

The Esperance community and our many regular visitors have been passionately engaged in discussions surrounding our old iconic tanker jetty after Council unanimously decided to demolish the structure in the interest of public safety. It was understandable that emotions would run high. Saying goodbye will be hard for us all, but after fact sheets were widely distributed, and more than an hour of question time, the community left the meeting better informed about the current state of the jetty, what has been done to this point and the process which must now be undertaken.

Particular focus has now turned to what the community would like to see as a replacement. This is the most important dialogue in relation to the old tanker jetty in order for us to move forward, make a plan, secure funding and deliver what the community want. It is also a difficult discussion and decision for Council to make as opinions vary greatly within the community.

Some believe the jetty should be reconstructed in exactly the same place and shape. There has been talk of alternatives such as a pool overlooking the ocean, ten pin bowling, fishing platforms and a restaurant in the place of the old jetty, some of which may be better considered as business opportunities rather than ratepayer funded services and assets. There have also been suggestions about petitions to restore the jetty, rebuild the jetty and to divert funds from the jetty to an indoor sports stadium.

Petitions show how passionate the community is about a particular issue, want or need, but applications for federal or state funding require more than petitions. They require ratepayers to put their hands in their own pockets as a gauge of how important a particular project is to a community. It is for this reason that funding applications often ask for matching funds from the Shire. The difficulty faced by Council is matching the vast amount of services desired in the community with the ability to pay for these.

Another challenge is meeting the needs of our community, which take priority over our wants. Waste collection is a critical service and the ability to dispose of waste is vital. The existing Waste Management Facility at Wyllie Bay has been in operation since 1988 and is approaching the end of its lifespan and nearing capacity. The license for the Wyllie Bay facility will not be renewed after August 2019, so there is a fixed point in time when a new facility will need to be operational. The road network in the Shire is vast and important for our agricultural region which in turn makes it important for our economy. Everything has a ripple effect. Ratepayers money goes towards services and assets that benefit the community as a whole, not necessarily all of which are utilised by every individual.

When it comes to accepting the “gift” of state and federal funding for new assets, it is our community that must accept the responsibility for the long term annual costs of that “gift”, which may have an impact on future rates.