

FROM THE COAST

Facts and Opinions

I was recently asked to write an opinion piece for a local newspaper. As a Councillor I have to be very careful about expressing my opinion because the decisions we make on behalf of our community have to be based on fact, rather than opinion. Councillors may have to put their opinions aside when making decisions, but community members do not. Still, it is very important to make the distinction between opinion and fact. Opinion is a judgement or belief resting on grounds insufficient to produce certainty, or a personal view. Fact is what has really happened or is the case; a truth known by actual experience. Let's look at some of the opinions that have been expressed in recent weeks, and the facts.

Opinion has been expressed that the Shire of Esperance Council made the decision to demolish our old tanker jetty before any reports were done. The fact is that Council made up its mind after the reports were done and presented to Council by highly qualified marine engineers along with the full costs of repair versus replace. The Council made the decision to defer demolition of the jetty so that a passionate community group could get an independent report to see if there was an alternative that Council would look at and compare with Council's report.

Opinion has been expressed that Council are not supportive of the community group committed to restoring the jetty. The fact is that this is a community group that is putting their money where their mouth is, so good on them! The group will present their reports to Council, which Council will discuss, and compare the propositions and the costings with what we already have. We will then make a decision on behalf of the community to provide a jetty for our community and region that will hopefully satisfy the majority.

Opinion was also expressed recently by a concerned member of the public that Council and past Councils have not spent one dollar on jetty repair or maintenance. The fact is since 1990 over \$920,000 has been spent on capital improvements and maintenance, and \$298,000 on structural reports and studies to ensure the jetty was safe for public use as it continued to deteriorate. That's \$1.2 million.

Another opinion often expressed is that Council has no intention of getting our town a jetty. The fact is our Council was as devastated as anyone else when we made the decision to demolish, knowing the effect it would have on our community. It is a Council resolution to get a jetty open for the community.

Here's my opinion. The Goldfields-Esperance community have been without a jetty for ten months now. It was quite clear from the Jetty Survey this year the community wants a jetty at the headland. So let's get the Jetty Group's reports and work together to get our town a recreational jetty in whatever shape or form we can afford.