

FROM THE COAST

Working Together as a Community

The replacement of the Tanker Jetty or rather, the demolition of the Tanker Jetty has brought emotions to the fore in our community and attracted a lot of criticism towards Council. We've seen the Facebook comments, we've heard talk of a petition but to date no-one has submitted anything to Council, and as far as we know no-one has started a crowd funding campaign. Despite many people both in and outside our community being quick to make assumptions and accusations toward Council and Shire staff, few have actually approached us to personally voice their concerns and find out the facts.

Don't get me wrong, we are a pretty tough lot. We know local government is an easy target and we know unpopular decisions sometimes have to be made, and there has been none so unpopular as the decision to demolish the jetty. Council unanimously voted to demolish the jetty in order to replace a failing, dangerous and unusable structure - a structure that was built to last 50 years that has been standing now for 80. Why would all 9 Councillors vote to demolish the jetty unnecessarily when we have never underestimated the emotions this decision would ignite, or the cultural and historical significance of the jetty? Since the State Government gave us the jetty, we have paid, patched and hung on to stretch out the life of this beautiful old icon. We are all residents of Esperance and love the jetty as much as everyone else.

The reality is we don't have an unlimited amount of money. We are a small community of ratepayers who are already concerned about the cost of existing rate increases. To cover the cost of repairs we would need a significantly larger population and even if that was a reality, a repair versus a replacement would only buy us a small amount of time until more repairs would be needed and then we would be back to square one.

Council has said repeatedly that the jetty will be replaced but in order to have a reasonable structure we need funding. We will need concept designs and business plans before many funding bodies will even consider applications. We have dedicated, trained staff in our organisation whose job it is to look for funding opportunities in state and federal government departments for any grant in any aspect that will help our town. In my role as Shire President I am in constant contact with Federal Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson, who has the Tanker Jetty listed as a priority project for this region, as well as continuing conversations with WA Minister for Regional Development Terry Redman and local Members Dave Grills and Graham Jacobs about this project.

In order to move forward we need to be realistic as a community. Expressing your anger on Facebook won't change the state of the jetty. Getting frustrated at past decisions doesn't help our community to move forward. We as a Council have made a responsible economic decision for our community and the resolution to demolish and replace still stands. We currently have 2 million dollars which isn't nearly enough. While we continue to apply for funding, there is nothing stopping the community from fundraising to show how important it is to them, and help us make it happen. Working together and moving forward as a united and proactive community will help demonstrate to funding bodies that this is a project worth getting behind, and that Esperance is a community worth investing in.