

Concerns about Surf Coast council's priorities

# Roads 'not keeping up'



Cr Heather Wellington

**JAIMEE WILKENS**

SURF Coast Shire councillor Heather Wellington has hit out at council spending on renewable energy, calling for a back-to-basics focus on roads and infrastructure instead.

Cr Wellington presented a motion to council on Tuesday night calling for a 2018-19 budget focused on road management, planning enforcement and local infrastructure.

She questioned whether

shire residents would agree with ratepayer money going towards renewable energy schemes over road management.

"There are some very basic things, such as roads and the renewal of roads, where we are simply not keeping up," Cr Wellington said.

"At the same time, we are constructing a lot of plans to do new things and we are taking on new things, which are all good things, there is no doubt about that. But there is a

question for me about prioritisation of how we spend our money."

Cr Wellington also requested a report analysing "the adequacy of the council's past and planned investment in planning enforcement, roads maintenance and maintenance of council-owned and/or managed infrastructure".

"I don't agree with the proposal that we take on things just because they're important. It's got to be our job to do it,"

Cr Wellington said. "Of course marriage equality is important, of course solar energy is important. There are a whole lot of things that are important that I'm personally very passionate about. But is it the job of council?"

Cr Wellington said she hoped to present the budget in a way that invited the community to engage in discussion around council expenditure.

The motion was defeated 3-5, with an alternative motion moved that affirms the import-

ance to the community of council's services and moves to develop the budget with consideration of all service areas.

Cr Libby Coker acknowledged the need for a greater focus on road management, but said the council had to cater for a diverse community.

"I know for young people in the Surf Coast there's been a recent study that shows renewable energy and climate change is the most important priority for them," Cr Coker said.



## Sea stars sparkle by the bay

**JAIMEE WILKENS**

TWENTY-THREE keen young nippers finished off another fantastic season at Anglesea beach last weekend as part of the Starfish Nippers program.

Starfish Nippers is an all-inclusive program run through the Anglesea Surf Life Saving Club that allows those with special needs to participate in the nipper program alongside their families and peers.

The program, in its seventh season, is designed to break down barriers and allow those with special needs to tackle a modified version of nippers, learning valuable water safety skills while having fun and forming friendships.

Program manager Janet Jones said Starfish Nippers was all about forming connections and making sure everyone felt a part of the community.

"This is the best aspect of Starfish Nippers — it is not a separate program for children with disabilities, it's all about including every child in nippers," she said.

"It means sisters and brothers are all in the same program, starting and ending at the same time and the same days.

"This program is far more than teaching these participants about beach safety and water skills — it is a real connection within the community."

Proud parent Sarah Jones is thrilled to have found a program in which all three of her children can be involved. Her son Jimmy is a Starfish Nipper and participates in the nipper program alongside sisters Sadie and Zara.

"It has been so good for his confidence and for him socially; he's found something he can do with his sisters where he wears the same uniform, starts and finishes at the same time," she said. "They all walk down together, and then break off into age groups so there's nothing that makes him stand out as a kid with a disability."

Each child has a personal trainer, who can modify exercises to meet their needs and abilities. Trainers are aged 16 to 60.

FUN IN THE SUN: Jimmy Jones with his sister Sadie at Anglesea Beach. Picture: ALISON WYND

## Support group walk changes

**OLIVIA SHYING**

A SUPPORT walk for community members affected by suicide has been moved from Australia Day to September to coincide with international suicide week.

Suicide Prevention Awareness Network (SPAN) co-founder Barbara Kosic said a number of factors, including the current closure of Johnstone Park, had led the organisation to move the walk date to September 9.

Ms Kosic, who lost her daughter to suicide 10 years ago, said the impact of suicide on the Geelong community remained profound.



Barbara Kosic

"It is not getting any better. The suicide toll is still bigger than the road toll and the age group is moving toward older men," Ms Kosic said. "I'm one of the founding members of

SPAN as we lost our daughter nearly 10 years ago."

SPAN was formed so bereaved people could have immediate access to a support network of people who had lost a loved one to suicide.

"There are a lot of questions that go through your mind (after losing someone) — like all the 'what if I'd done that?', and 'what if I'd noticed this?'," Ms Kosic said.

She said bereaved members of the community could always access support from SPAN or Suicide Awareness Support through spangeelong.com.

**Those needing mental health support can call Lifeline on 13 11 14.**

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