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Please attribute information below to Shire President, Cr Wayne Fewster

MEDIA RELEASE

Shire President's Response to Coastal Management Planning

Shire of Gingin Residents and Ratepayers

Due to the disappointing and constant misinformation travelling around various social media platforms I will attempt to clarify Council's position on some of the matters raised.

As most of you would be aware, all Coastal Councils must prepare a CHRMAP to assist in planning for future issues surrounding coastal erosion and inundation. Without this, the Shire cannot seek funding for more detailed investigations that will help manage risks for our coastal communities, which is the ultimate aim of the CHRMAP. Council engaged various consultants, coastal engineers, coastal scientists, and the Department of Transport and Planning, Lands and Heritage to name a few to prepare the original CHRMAP and this draft document. As you would be aware, the document is nearing its preparation for final adoption and as part of that process Council will be deciding on actions and improvements that the public consultation period has raised.

Please be assured we understand the concerns and angst in the community to certain aspects of the report and will take all feedback and submissions seriously. I must also point out for those who have criticised Council for lack of consultation, these latest drop-in sessions are exactly that "CONSULTATION SESSIONS" and follow three separate in-person and two separate online feedback opportunities during 2021 and 2022.

My family have had a home in Guilderton for over 60 years and my immediate family have recently purchased a home in Ledge Point and have, like many others, launched our boat off the beach, fished and driven on the beach so I understand the concerns raised so far. Contrary to what some people have said no decision has been made to close beaches to 4WD vehicles or move existing boat launching areas. The recommendation from the report is that we consider these actions. I repeat, no decision has been made and no decision will be made until we have finalised this consultation phase, which may be extended, and received the document and the feedback and then receive recommendations for consideration and this can again be open for consultation. For example, if I look at the boat launching issue, I for one would agree that the recommendations for Lancelin and Ledge Point are problematic for many reasons, at least in the short to medium term, and likewise with beach access in some areas. However, as our towns grow and further environmental impacts occur, we may at some stage have to consider additional management practices.

Maybe instead of being angry and abusive towards Council some of you could direct your aggression towards the State and Federal politicians and lobby for safer and more appropriate boat launching facilities as we have nothing between Two Rocks and Jurien Bay, some 90 kms of coastline, Council can only do so much, we need your help.

I would also like to focus on the issue of the abuse Shire staff have been receiving. It is obvious that quite a few out there in social media world have no or very little understanding of local government processes. Yes, certain staff have appropriate delegated authority to make some decisions and are responsible for preparing reports for Council and they are obligated to consider all relevant information and make recommendations to Council.

However, in many instances, including the issues being raised above, after considering all information including the comments received during the consultation phase, it is Council, yes, the Councillors, who will make any decision, not staff.

In hindsight, some of the proposals in the reports were understandably quite confronting, however I believe somewhat better than being given a blank piece of paper and being asked to comment on that or Council taking action without consultation. Council is faced with having to consider reports prepared by experts in their field of expertise and if we ignore all the advice provided and they are proven to be correct then I know who the public will come after.

I appreciate many of you have opinions and especially those who have lived in the region for many years have much experience and knowledge on these issues. You are the people we want to hear from through your submissions. I note that there is also support for many of the recommendations by some community members. In most instances in cases like this, there is always some middle ground or a consensus which is able to be found, usually by having discussions in a civil and respectful manner.

In closing, on behalf of Council I would like to thank all those who participated in the two recent drop-in sessions and made a commitment to consult further if needed. This is a very important issue, and we need to get it right.

I would also like to thank Anna Kelderman and her team at Shape Urban for their time and work done on the reports and the workshops.

On behalf of my fellow Councillors, I simply say, we are listening.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Wayne Fewster
Shire President

-Ends-

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