

PHILLIP ISLAND & SAN REMO ADVERTISER

Your Community Voice!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020

\$1.40 Incl. GST

Limit stays at 20!

In a blow to local restaurants, cafes, pubs and hotels, the state government has said the 20-person limit will remain in place until at least July 12, due to increased COVID-19 transmission in the state.

The announcement dashed the plans for venues and attractions to increase their capacity over the school holidays.

The booking limit of 20 is still in place for caravan parks, camping groups and hostels, however the on-site community facilities can now open. Overnight stays in tourist accommodation also have a 20-person limit on group bookings.

General Manager of Destination Phillip Island, Kim Storey said she was devastated for the local industry and the restrictions would impact on tourism and hospitality owners trying to "collect valuable income with a larger capacity"

"All things considered the most important point is that we all need to follow the directions from the Chief Medical Officer, and we certainly want our region to remain safe from COVID-19."

Ms Storey said she hoped people

would travel and stay in the region during the school holidays.

"We will encourage visitors to source takeaways, produce, and make booked sittings at venues and experiences that are bookable."

"Visitors have the opportunity to discover the Whale Trail, and our Holiday Parks will be welcoming caravanners and campers again, one of our key traditional markets to the region."

DPI has launched a "Wander this Winter" campaign with television commercials and social media videos to encourage people to visit Phillip Island.

She said the DPI board was seeking strong support for the local industry and the many small businesses affected by the pandemic.

The Victorian Tourism Industry Council said operators across the state were struggling.

In a recent survey of members, 87 per cent said they had partially or fully ceased operations since the CO-

VID-19 restrictions were put in place, but 46 per cent reopened at the start of June when restrictions eased.

Of the businesses that did not reopen, 50 per cent said they were allowed to, but chose not to, because it was financially unviable, or they could not meet the distance and space requirements.

Local operators have voiced similar concerns, with some predicting many businesses will close once the JobKeeper subsidies finish (see separate story).

Back to the pub

Although the 20-person limit has not increased, patrons are now able to drink at a pub without ordering a meal.

Nick Say from the Westernport Hotel in San Remo said while the decision not to increase the limit to 50 was frustrating, he supported the government decision.

"I'd rather the stronger approach now and knock it on the head and then open for summer," he said.

"If we miss out on the summer trade, we'll be in all sorts of trouble."

Nick said their customers are trying to support the venue as much as possible, ordering food as well as drinks,

however anyone wanting to come in just for a drink was also welcome.

"We really want people back in the building. A pub is not pub without people."

Despite the restrictions staying in place, the Westernport has extended its opening times from Thursday to Sunday.

"We're open for dinner on Thursday, from 5pm until 9pm, then all day Friday, Saturday and Sunday," said Nick.

"People can come in and watch the footy and we're serving meals all day."

With hotels, bars and restaurants operating with limited capacity, he said anyone wanting to eat out should call ahead and make a reservation.

"I think this is true for all hospitality venues - we all want to encourage forward bookings. It is hard to manage expectations with walk ups."

"We hate saying no to people."

Nick and his wife Mish also run the Phillip Island Winery, which has now reopened Friday through to Sunday, with three seatings per day.

Every session has been booked out since the winery reopened earlier this month.

Reassessing daily

The popular San Remo Hotel had also been looking forward to restric-

tions easing.

It is currently operating six days a week (closed Tuesdays), with the bistro serving dinner on weekdays and lunch and dinner on the weekend.

Hotel manager Elyse Pratt said as they are able to seat diners in the bistro and sports bar, the overall capacity of the venue was 53 patrons.

The number of customers who are able to just come in for a drink will be determined by the number of bistro bookings.

"If we have 40 bookings, then we will have 13 spare seats in the sports bar for customers just looking to drink," explained Elyse.

"However if we have 53 bookings come through then they will take priority."

"All of our customers are extremely understanding and abiding to all guidelines which has been a great help."

On Wednesdays, the hotel will open from 12pm until 5pm for bar service only, with meals starting from 5pm.

She said with the changing restrictions and variable weather, they are reassessing daily if they need to increase or reduce hours, including at the bottle shop.

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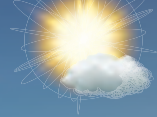




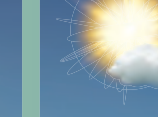
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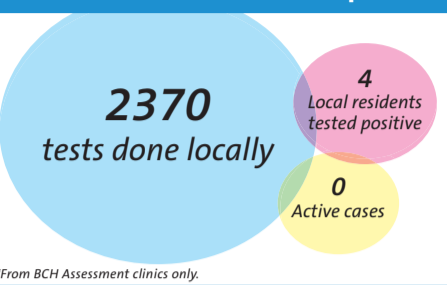
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Cloudy	Partly cloudy	Shower or two	Showers easing	Shower or two	Partly cloudy	Partly cloudy
8° 13°	8° 15°	8° 17°	10° 15°	10° 15°	10° 14°	10° 14°

Bass Coast COVID-19 update*



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Done and dusted for Sunset Strip

Sunset Strip residents failed to get the support of Bass Coast Shire councillors in their push to have dust suppressant seals reinstated on local roads. Residents lodged a petition in February with the shire, containing 232 signatures, detailing their objections to the shire's "excessive" special charge scheme for roads and drainage, and calling for roads to be covered with the "successful" dust suppressant.

New gravel roads in Sunset Strip were installed by the shire in November after the dust suppressant seal was removed from Sunset Drive, Bermagui Crescent, Back Beach Road service road and Happy Valley Drive.

Residents Colleen McGrath and Paul Doherty presented the petition and have led a campaign to have the dust suppressant reinstated on Sunset Strip roads.

"This has become a very drawn out process that has a simple solution. That is a spray on bitumen. This will stop the choking dust in summer and the slippery mud in winter," they said.

"Given the financial stress Covid has put on our communities, it becomes even more unrealistic to expect our small community to come up with more than \$7 million for a Council endorsed roads and drains project most people don't want."

However, councillors at last week's meeting disagreed, saying dust suppressant was not a solution with the



Sunset Strip residents call to reinstate dust suppressant seals on local roads saying the new gravel roads caused amenity and health issues, was dismissed by councillors.

shire's policy of street schemes the only answer.

Cr Stephen Fullarton said the push for a temporary spray seal had been abandoned by past councils because the cost was "not acceptable".

He said his "greatest frustration and disappointment" was that this current council had progressed no street schemes.

"In the 1980s Phillip Island Council wanted to seal every street but that was thwarted. In 1983 it would have cost \$3000 per property but now it costs \$18,000," Cr Fullarton said.

"Sunset Strip's street scheme was thwarted (at the time of the last council) when angry people from the city said they were happy to live on dirt roads.

"I have been approached by people living in Sunset Strip pleading for a street scheme.

"We need the people of Sunset Strip to get behind council and get a street scheme."

Cr Michael Whelan said developers created subdivisions "on the cheap", "getting away with third world conditions".

"We need to stick to the council policy to get facilities, but it has to be done through a road and drainage scheme," Cr Whelan said.

Cr Bruce Kent said primer seal was not a long-term solution.

"Sunset Strip residents should speak to Cape Woolamai residents who originally complained about their street scheme but now say the outcome is great."

Residents respond

Colleen and Paul responded to the council vote, describing it as "pathetic".

"In a matter of minutes council snubbed over 200 Sunset Strip residents by not acknowledging their letters and complaints," they said.

"Not one word mentioned about our health and safety, core issues. They voted unanimously to continue the unforfeiting mantra of roads, drains, roads, drains and a few footpaths too."

They said Cr Fullarton's dream was to "pave Phillip island, but it's our nightmare".

"Cr Fullarton was elected to represent the people not to live his dreams. While he had 200-plus letters from a united community, mostly permanent residents, he claims this issue has been driven by out of towners."

Resident Matt West also responded to the livestreamed councillor vote, saying "it was really disappointing and I actually wish I hadn't watched it".

"Their message was that holiday house owners alone were stopping the roads program, which is really sad and poor leadership," Matt said.

Earlier this year residents complained to the Ombudsman about the shire's lack of action on the road, with an officer from the Ombudsman's office last week replying the residents had no case.

Virtual fence takes a hit

Part of the virtual fence designed to protect wildlife on the Cowes-Rhyll road has been destroyed.

Earlier this month, a driver swerved to avoid a wallaby and lost control of their vehicle. The car took out one of the virtual fence devices before crashing into an embankment.

Bass Coast Shire Council said they detected the damaged device as part of a site inspection.

"The device is replaceable, and one will be reinstalled in the next week or two and will have minimal impact on the study," a council spokesperson said.

Roadkill trial

Virtual fencing was introduced on a section of the Cowes-Rhyll Road in April.

Bass Coast Shire allocated \$30,000 to address the island's roadkill problem, after citizen scientist Ron Day

began his own roadkill survey on the Cowes-Rhyll Road.

Virtual fencing is activated by approaching headlights, emitting sound and light to alert and repel animals from the roadside.

Mayor Cr Brett Tessari said the shire had been working with Phillip Island Nature Parks and Victoria University researchers to examine the effectiveness of the technology.

"If the trial is effective, virtual fencing may be considered for broader implementation at known hot spots across Bass Coast Shire and potentially, more broadly across the state," Cr Tessari said.

A Nature Parks spokesperson said the study would provide evidence for the possible influence of virtual fencing on roadkill rates.

He said a full 12-month period was required to account for seasonal changes in the rates.

Blaze of glory



The Noble Tom Prosser, the oil rig moored off Cowes since April left in a spectacular blaze of lights last week. Originally due to depart on Wednesday, June 17, weather conditions delayed the departure with the rig finally being towed out of Western Port at 9pm on Thursday night. The rig is returning to Bass Strait. Photo: Brian Asbury.

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Cultural Centre demolition gets the green light

The demolition of the Cowes Cultural Centre moved one step closer after Bass Coast Shire councillors last week approved the contractor to flatten the building.

Contractor Deconstruct Group was successfully awarded the tender to demolish, with the site handed over to them after July 13, and the works expected to take about two months to finish.

The demolition will be in two stages, with this contract for stage one only.

The \$230,983 contract included a provisional sum of \$7,732 for asbestos removal, including hygienist costs.

Earlier this year the shire advised it would stop taking bookings for the existing building from July 1.

According to the timeline for the project construction is not due to begin until May 2021.

Last month, Architectural firm Jackson Clements Burrows was awarded the \$1.4 million contract to finalise the designs of the new centre, at 91-97 Thompson Avenue, Cowes.

Some community groups have accused the shire of pushing through the project without adequate consultation and before full funding is secured.

Phillip Island Voice and the Bass Coast Residents and Ratepayers Association described the plans for demolition as premature.

Cr Stephen Fullarton addressed community concerns about “vacant land sitting there for a substantial amount of time”, saying “there were always issues with demolition of buildings”, including possibly asbestos.

“I equate this to a large house project I’m working on in Coronet Bay,” said Cr Fullarton, who works in construction, “and the engineers required that building sit for three to



A demolition contract has been awarded to Deconstruct Group to demolish the existing Cowes Cultural Centre. The site will be handed over after July 13.

four months to allow moisture into the soil.

“There can be other structural reasons, but we also need to move ahead and get something done.”

Cr Les Larke was prevented from speaking by Mayor Brett Tessari after he attacked the project, saying “it should never have been approved”.

“The money could have been allocated across the shire in roads, footpaths and drainage,” Cr Larke said, before Cr Tessari intervened saying he needed to stick to the point of the motion.

Cr Fullarton responded saying Cr Larke “clearly had no understanding

of our community at all”.

Cr Pam Rothfield said only one contractor applied for the tender, so “we didn’t have much choice, but they qualified”.

At the October 2019 meeting, council voted to demolish the existing building and construct a modern centre.

A report presented at the meeting said demolishing the current building and designing a new facility will be marginally less expensive than renovating and redesigning the existing structure.

The cost of the project is estimated at \$19 million.

No increase for Penguin Parade

Plans for Phillip Island Nature Parks to increase visitor numbers to 250, as well as reopening the Antarctic Journey and the Nobbies Centre, have been shelved.

On the weekend, the state government announced some restrictions would be re-imposed to try and contain rising rates of COVID-19 infection.

Following that announcement, Phillip Island Nature Parks issued a statement saying they would now continue to operate at the original maximum capacity limit of 100 visitors.

“We will not be increasing capacity at the Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Reserve and Churchill Island to 250 visitors as we had announced on Friday 19 June,” the statement said.

“The Antarctic Journey and Nobbies visitor centre will remain closed for the time being, however we will be opening the Nobbies Kiosk from Saturday 27 June.”

Online tickets are essential to gain entry to all of PINP’s attractions, and the organisation said staff are ensuring that physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures remain implemented across all venues so visitors and staff can all stay safe.

School holiday activities

Despite the continuing restrictions, the Nature Parks has announced they



Plans to increase the visitor numbers at the Penguin Parade and other attractions were abandoned after the state government re-introduced restrictions to contain rising COVID-19 infection rates.

will still be offering additional school holiday activities at the Koala Conservation Reserve and Churchill Island.

At the Koala Conservation Reserve, a digital quest has been set up for the young (and the young at heart) to experience a self-guided journey through the woodlands, learning about koalas; their precious habitat and how the Nature Parks is helping save them from their plight.

At Churchill Island, old fashioned games and a heritage quest will be available daily, with costumed staff on hand to provide some extra pointers on weekends. The walking tracks are all open for public use as well.

Aquatics dream one step closer

Bass Coast Shire Council has announced the next step in the process to purchase land for the proposed Aquatics and Recreation Precinct on the outskirts of Cowes.

The land at the southwest corner of the intersection of Phillip Island and Ventnor roads, also known as the Cowes Carnival Site, is now the subject of a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO), after the Minister for Planning gazetted Amendment C153.

Council said the application of the PAO reserves the land, so that it can be “acquired to establish and

enhance the public open space network on Phillip Island”.

A spokesperson said officers will negotiate with the landowner to finalise the sale. The land is earmarked to be home to the Phillip Island Aquatics and Recreation Precinct, which Council said will “provide Phillip Island with essential recreation and aquatics facility to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and visitors to the Island”.

Residents of Phillip Island have waged a decades long campaign for an aquatic centre.



BACK BEACH ROAD AND PHILLIP ISLAND ROAD ROUNABOUT CONSTRUCTION NIGHT WORKS.

Fowlers Asphalting Pty Ltd, on behalf of Regional Roads Victoria, are constructing a new dual lane roundabout at the intersection of Phillip Island Road and Back Beach Road, Phillip Island.

To minimise disruptions, some of the works will be undertaken at night, between Sunday 28th June and Friday 3rd July, weather permitting. These works will generally be carried out between 6:00pm and 6:00am. During these times, a 40km/h speed limit and lane closures will apply, with traffic controllers on site to direct road users safely through the work zone. Keep an eye out for changed traffic conditions and expect delays. Allow extra travel time.

Fowlers Asphalting Pty Ltd and Regional Roads Victoria thank you for your patience whilst these important works are being undertaken.

For further enquiries, please contact our office on 5633 2918 or

Daniel Parise on 0438 030 221.

Further information on the project can be found online, by visiting regionalroads.vic.gov.au and searching ‘Back Beach Road roundabout’.

Real-time traffic conditions, including road closures, are available at traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au or via the VicTraffic mobile app.



NOW OPEN!

Bookings Essential

With restrictions starting to ease, we are allowed to open next week. Things are going to be a lot different though and we will need you all to adjust with us. So for the next month we will just be a bowling alley with only 16 bowlers at a time.

BOOKINGS NOW ESSENTIAL.

Instead of purchasing games, we will be booking sessions. Cost will be \$20 per person for an hour session of unlimited bowling with only 2 people per lane. We will NOT be open for amusement games, NO children’s playground, NO Lazer Zone, NO Pool Tables and NO cafe. We will be a bowling alley, able to serve drinks, alcoholic and non-alcoholic plus confectionery. Please arrive 15min prior to session times as these will not be flexible.

Cost is \$20 per person/per session Adults and Children. This is going to be tricky for all of us to adapt to, so we thank you for your patience through these times. Call us on **5952 3977** to make a booking, because with only 16 bowlers per session, we’re sure they will start to fill up fast.

**Sessions available
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7.30pm – 8.30pm

**Sessions available
Sat June 27 to Sun July 12**
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10.45am – 11.45am
12pm – 1pm
1.15pm – 2.15pm
2.30pm – 3.30pm
3.45pm – 4.45pm
5pm – 6pm
6.15pm – 7.15pm
7.30 – 8.30pm



Budget pain and gain

The bad news: you'll pay more for Bass Coast Shire rates, including a massive price hike for the privilege of kerbside waste.

The good news: Phillip Island will receive a bumper number of major projects, including planning for a community pool, a new transfer station, Cowes Cultural Centre redevelopment, and upgrades at Anderson Road boat ramp and Rhyll jetty area.

Plus, those hit by the economic impact of Coronavirus will have further financial support, totalling \$4 million, while about 16 senior shire staff have foregone an annual salary increase in response to COVID-19.

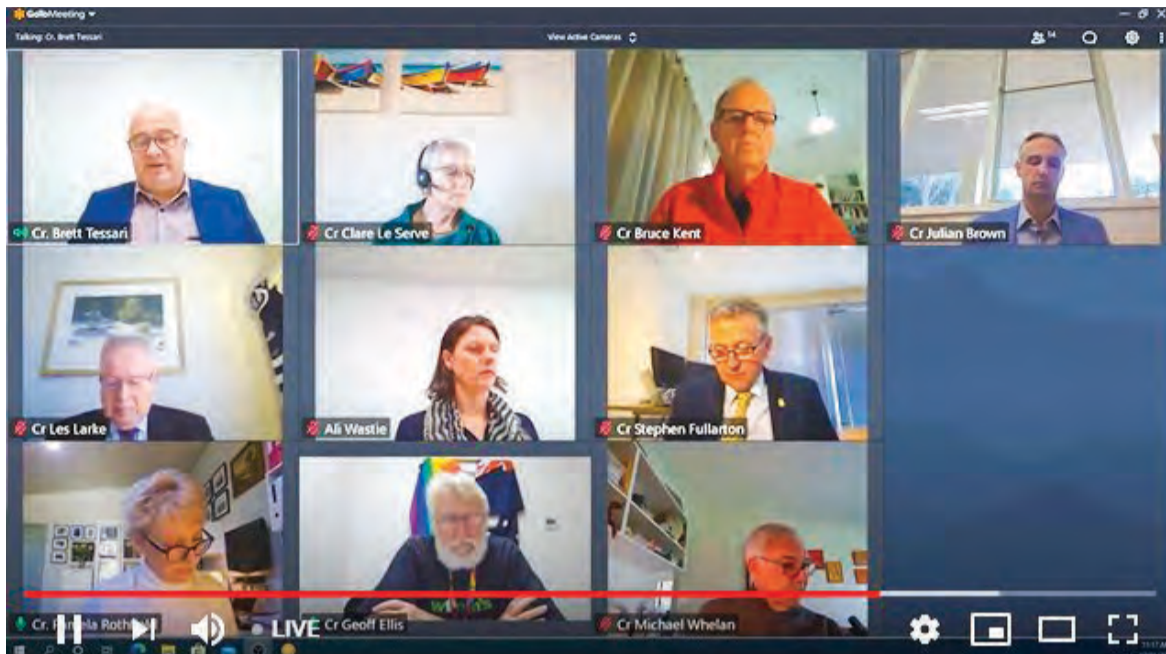
The shire's draft budget for 2020-2021, released last week for public comment, includes sweeteners to soften the sour.

While some had hoped for no increase to rates, given the current economic slump, the budget proposes a two per cent increase, in keeping with the State Government's rate cap and in line with about 70 per cent of other councils.

The average rates bill will be \$1544, based on a property re-evaluation at the start of this year, which saw properties increase by an average four per cent.

However, rates also include garbage charges, which this year cop a whopping 11 per cent increase to \$496.50, making Bass Coast's one of the highest in Victoria (see separate story).

The budget states the two per cent increase was necessary to deliver services, "stimulate the local economy and provide employment opportunities".



The draft budget was presented at the June Council meeting and is open for public comment and submissions until Tuesday, July 21.

As such, the budget will pump \$28 million into capital works, including:

- Aquatics planning and design (Phillip Island and Wonthaggi) – \$3.08 million;
- Phillip Island recreation reserve planning (the proposed sports hub on the 'carnival land') – \$150,000;
- Cowes Cultural and Community Centre redevelopment – \$4 million (being the initial funding for a \$19 million project);

- Phillip Island Transfer Station planning and design – \$250,000 and Gap Road assessment and plan (to determine use for the remainder of the 45ha site) – \$100,000;
- Anderson Road boat ramp east carpark upgrade, Cowes – \$380,000;
- Rhyll Jetty area plan (including paving and landscaping the gravel area) – \$30,000;
- Cowes public area improvement plans (around the Cultural Centre

and main street) – \$350,000;

- Bass Coast dinosaur trail plan – \$250,000;
- Climate Change Actions – \$500,000; and
- Wonthaggi Secondary College Senior Campus plan – \$100,000

Response

Cowes resident Peter McMahon has analysed the budget and said once

again the shire's number crunchers had been "crafty" with figures, "picking and choosing how they present the numbers so when you first read the document it looks great".

"However, on further checking I am not so sure. The budget doesn't allow the average person to follow it logically," Peter said.

"One of the big red flags of the budget is the massive increase on the garbage charge of 11.6 per cent. Our charge has to be one of the most expensive in Victoria."

Peter said his other concerns with the budget included the Cowes Cultural Centre demolition and rebuild.

"In October last year we were told they would borrow \$10 million to build the Cowes Cultural Centre and now this budget says they will borrow just \$4 million. So how long will it be before the Cultural Centre is rebuilt?"

Peter welcomed the budget allocation of \$150,000 for what he hoped was a master plan for the proposed new sports hub, on the corner of Phillip Island and Ventnor roads (awaiting final approval from the State Government on compulsory acquisition).

He also welcomed \$3.8 million for aquatics planning, for the current Wonthaggi pool and the long-awaited island pool.

CEO Ali Wastie said anyone struggling to pay rates in the current climate could be helped by the shire's hardship policy.

"We totally understand how tough it is with job losses, especially on Phillip Island," Ms Wastie said.

"Earlier this year we put in place

Seatbelts. What's stopping you?

Last year, 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt.

a hardship policy so people doing it tough can be helped.

“We’re also spending on capital works to stimulate the economy.”

Cr Pam Rothfield said it was “unfortunate” they were increasing rates by the two per cent cap.

Cr Les Larke – usually a critic of council coffers – said he was “satisfied with some exceptions”, especially legacy issues of debt.

COVID-19

The draft budget allocates \$2.8 million in fee relief and economic stimulus in response to COVID-19.

Following a \$965,000 pandemic recovery package announced in April this year, a second recovery package is proposed in this budget.

This does not include grants, but proposes fee waivers, funding to promote the shire and identifies projects to stimulate the economy, bringing the shire’s total Coronavirus response to about \$4 million, including:

- Freeze on fees and charges – \$350,000
- Full year waiver of business signage, footpath trading and liquor licences – \$30,000
- Three months’ rent relief to shire lessees – \$200,000
- Business and event recovery support – \$40,000
- Affordable housing initiative – \$130,000

“Council is acutely aware of the financial and social impacts of COVID-19 in our community,” the budget states.

“Ratepayers will have the ability to access rate relief should they need it under our new hardship policy adopted by in May.”

Rate increase

The average rate bill rises to \$1544 across 32,115 rateable properties in the shire.

A revaluation of all properties was

carried out in January and will apply for the 2020-2021 year, with an average four per cent rise.

Of this increase, residential properties have increased by 3.6 per cent, farms by 5.4 per cent, commercial properties by 4.7 per cent, industrial properties by 4.6 per cent and vacant properties by 7.2 per cent.

“The proposed budget continues to support our agricultural community with a rating differential of 80 per cent, plus the opportunity to apply for the Rural Land Management Program, which returns approximately \$634,000 in environmental value to the rural community,” the budget states.

In real terms, total rates – including the \$496.50 garbage charge and two per cent rate cap – will be up 3.3 per cent.

Last year the real increase was 4.25 per cent, while the budget forecasts the ‘21-‘22 increase will be five per cent, followed by further hits of 5.6 per cent (‘22-‘23) and 5.5 per cent (in ‘23-‘24).

Rates and charges this year will total \$64.5 million, rising to \$75.6 million in 2023.

State-wide the Consumer Price Index is forecast to be 2.25 per cent in 2020-21.

A formal review of the shire’s rating strategy was started in the past year but was discontinued in the wake of COVID-19.

Bottom line

Bass Coast’s draft budget projects a total operating income of \$82.5 million and total operating expenditure of \$79.4 million, with an underlying surplus of \$200,000.

Debt servicing alone will cost \$12.5 million, with \$5.5 million in new borrowings to fund the capital works program, therefore increasing total borrowings to \$20.1 million from June 2021.

An Enterprise Agreement for shire

staff wages started in the 2018/19 financial year, provides a 1.8 per cent annual salary increment to officers across the three years ending June 2022.

Senior shire officers have foregone their 1.8 per cent annual salary increase in response to COVID-19.

Employee costs remained stable at \$29.6 million, compared to \$29.2 million last year; although this will rise to \$34.1 million in 2023/24, with staff numbers continuing to hover around 292 full-time equivalents.

Peter McMahon commented that “for the first time we have the number of staffing positions within the budget”.

“Previously we have had to wait for the annual report to obtain them,” he said.

Have your say

The draft budget will be open for public comment and submissions until Tuesday, July 21.

Council will receive and hear submissions from the public at a special meeting on July 29.

The final 2020/21 budget will be presented at the council meeting on August 19.

Due to COVID-19 the shire will not hold a drop-in session, as in prior years.

Instead there will be an online Facebook forum where the community can give input and ask questions.

Details: Facebook – Tuesday, July 7 at www.facebook.com/basscoast-shire from 6pm to 7.30pm.

Copies of the draft 2020/21 budget are available for inspection at: Bass Coast Civic Centre (airlock) Wonthaggi or Grantville Transaction Centre, 1504-1510 Bass Hwy.

The budget can also be downloaded from www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/budget or request a copy by mail, by phoning 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211.



Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve volunteers planting at the Reserve entrance.

Getting Scenic

The Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve (FOSER) emerged from COVID isolation to hold its first group activity since March with two planting days.

John Eddy, FOSER coordinator said Bass Coast Shire Council, which manages the Reserve along with Phillip Island Nature Parks and Parks Victoria, gave approval for the planting day, provided FOSER follow strict guidelines for the event.

“The aim was to plant and guard 190 plants over two small sites, one at the entrance from the carpark, and the other near the inland picnic shelter,” explained John.

“With a total of 15 participants over the two days, that was easily achieved.”

He said both the sites had previously presented problems when FOSER tried to establish new indigenous plants.

“They had been severely damaged and compacted by vehicle misuse in the 50 or so years of neglect between the failure of the old 1960s subdivision and the creation of the new Conservation Reserve five years ago,” said John.

“So this year, we took the unusual step of having the sites cultivated with a chisel plough in the week prior to planting. Hopefully, that will assist the plants to take hold.”

He extended his thanks to the dedicated FOSER volunteers and said the group hopes to hold a Community Day with guided tours of the Reserve late in September, if COVID restriction allow.

Community Bank · San Remo, Cowes and Grantville

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 <p>Be considerate of businesses and traders who have to temporarily close</p>	 <p>Support businesses by purchasing a gift voucher that you can use later</p>



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What a waste: rubbish fees skyrocket

Councillors last week debated two contentious massive price hikes in waste processing for Bass Coast.

Bass Coast ratepayers fork out more for garbage than almost any other Victorian shire.

According to council's draft budget for 2020-2021 – released last week – households will pay \$496.50 for the privilege of kerbside waste removal.

This is an 11 per cent increase, up from \$449, following another 11 per cent hike the previous year.

In 2018 we paid \$374 for garbage charges.

By contrast, neighbouring shire South Gippsland in their draft 20-21 budget is expected to pay a \$217 garbage charge, a rise of \$10.

In Surf Coast, their garbage charge for the next financial year will be \$427, while Baw Baw – a similar shire to ours – pays \$384 and in Nillimbuk it's \$423.

The Alpine Shire waste charge is \$314, although their red bin is 80 litres, which is emptied weekly (compared to 120 litres in Bass Coast emptied fortnightly), while several shires don't have green bins.

Bass Coast's draft budget states the charge "has been impacted by the increased cost of recycling and planned capital works for waste infrastructure".

It states that the garbage charge will increase for the next two years by 5.3 per cent.

Cowes resident Peter McMahon said the garbage fee was one of the most disappointing parts of the draft budget.

"One of the big red flags of the budget is the massive increase on the garbage charge of 11 per cent. Our charge has to be one of the most expensive in Victoria," Peter said.

"There's no transparency around what we are paying for. We entered into a 10-year contract and after three years we're continuing to get variations."

He said initially the shire blamed a garbage charge increase on China's ban on Australian recycling, "but what

is their excuse for this one?"

Shire chief financial officer David Filmlalter said a combination of factors had increased the garbage charge, including ongoing pressure on recycling costs, the building of a new transfer station on Phillip Island, increased landfill monitoring costs and extra charges from the shire's recycling contractor.

"In the last two years the industry has been impacted by significant external factors," Mr Filmlalter said.

Shire CEO Ali Wastie said garbage charges differed between councils.

"It's important to compare apples with apples, to understand each cost you need to look at the breakdown of what is included," Ms Wastie said.

First price hike

Councillors at last week's meeting were acutely aware of the price hike for garbage, with one admitting there will be "kickback from the community" on rubbish collection costs, with contentious debate around why we are being hit so hard.

In two separate issues last week, councillors voted on two massive price hikes in rubbish fees that have hit Bass Coast.

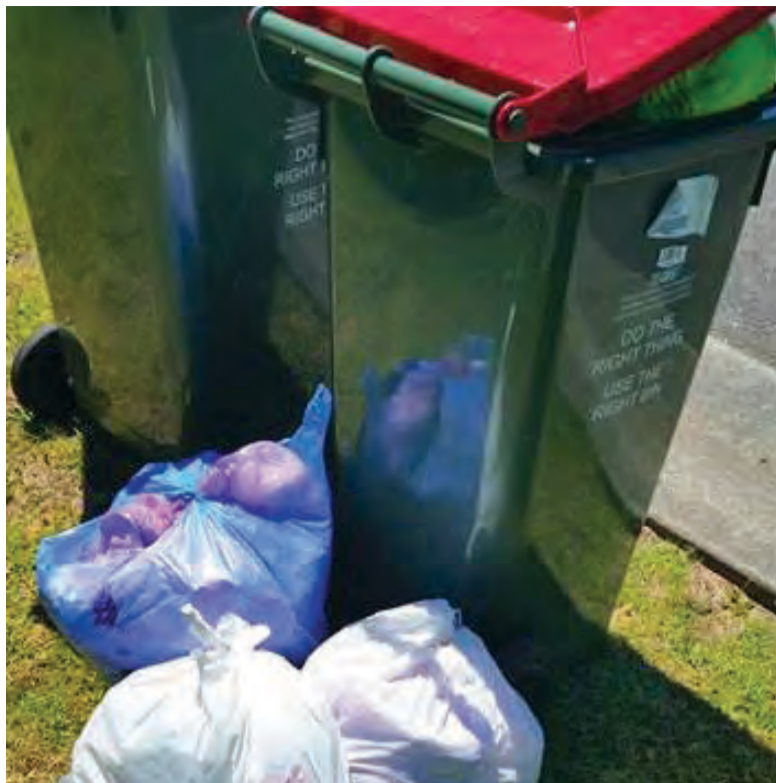
The first hike was for (legally required) environmental monitoring of landfill sites at Rhyll, Grantville and Wonthaggi by contractors Meinhardt Infrastructure & Environment Pty Ltd.

A three-year contract from 2019 was originally for \$258,720, with the contractor now seeking an increase of \$171,943 over two years, which is a jump of more than 60 per cent.

Shire offices say the increase is due to a "discrepancy" discovered in the contract.

Cr Les Larke attempted to defer voting to investigate the discrepancy, adding the cost would "flow to ratepayers", but was outvoted.

Cr Pam Rothfield said errors and omissions "happen" and it was necessary to meet monitoring obligations, to which Cr Geoff Ellis agreed.



In 2018 we paid \$374 for garbage charges on our rates notice. This coming year we'll pay \$496, according to the draft budget.

"I know it's a lot of ratepayers' money, but given we have to meet our obligations (this) gets my vote," he said.

Second price hike

The second hike was for \$1.83 million for recycling services by Wonthaggi Recyclers, including their management of Inverloch and Wonthaggi Transfer Stations and the continued collection and processing of recyclables.

According to Wonthaggi Recyclers the fee imposed by Visy Recycling for the shire's recyclable materials has increased from \$100 per tonne to \$145 per tonne, or a rise of 45 per cent.

Cr Les Larke was this time successful in deferring the vote for a month on this increase, requesting advice on renegotiating the contract with Wonthaggi Recyclers and "identifying the risks" associated with that.

"This gives us some breathing space to get a better outcome on behalf of ratepayers," Cr Larke said.

"My major concern is that Wonthaggi Recyclers appears to have acted independently of council and are looking to pass on the cost without council negotiation."

Cr Julian Brown agreed, saying "it needs to be fair and equitable between the cost to the council – and therefore the

ratepayer – and Wonthaggi Recyclers".

"That is a massive increase at a time when the economy is shrinking," he said.

Crs Pam Rothfield and Michael Whelan were the only two to vote against Cr Larke's deferral of the price hike, with Cr Whelan saying Visy had a "monopoly" but the alternative to not paying the increase was that "recycling goes to landfill".

"Which is not acceptable," he said.

"This is unfortunate but at this point in time we're between a rock and a hard place."

"It's all very well being hairy-chested and saying the contractor can end up wearing the cost."

Cr Rothfield said "nobody liked to spend more money than they have to" but "this was a societal problem", flowing from China's ban on taking Australian recycling waste.

"We have to understand the value of what we have in our rubbish and we can't just go sending it to other nations. We have to deal with our own rubbish."

She said it was not an option to stockpile recycling material as some councils had done last year, when one large Melbourne recycling company went into receivership.

"Competition has reduced and costs have skyrocketed. There's no way out of it, we have to pay more."

Cr Bruce Kent said it was important to support Wonthaggi Recyclers, a local employer.

"The last thing we want to see is a local industry go under," Cr Kent said.

"But we can expect kickback from the community on costs for rubbish collection, so we need to sell this with full information, then we will carry the community with us."

The vote on the \$1.83 million price hike will go to the July council meeting. If it goes ahead it would take effect for the next two years and could then again be renegotiated with another hike, with a 10-year contract between the shire and Wonthaggi Recyclers running until 2027.

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne



Smiths Beach has a grand plan

Parking fees for visitors should be introduced at Smiths Beach, according to a group of residents.

"User-pays" parking is just one of the ideas to be flagged by the Smiths Beachcomber Association for the area's proposed Town Plan, just released by Bass Coast Shire and out for public comment until June 30.

President of the Smiths Beachcomber Association Phil Dressing said the group – which has about 80 members – has been lobbying for a plan for the hamlet since 2006.

Phil said while he welcomed the release of the much-awaited plan, he was disappointed in its contents and the shire's public consultation methods including online Zoom meetings, a 15-minute online survey, and an interactive map.

"The plan is very broad and fails to identify or target specific issues," Phil said.

"As for the consultation methods, I'm fearful that because they're casting their net so broadly the agenda could be written by non-residents.

"Currently every man and his dog can pass comment, whether they know the issues specific to Smiths Beach or not."

Phil said instead of being so broad, the plan should have listed specific issues facing the hamlet, including:

- Paid parking for visitors, not locals, with a pilot scheme at Beachcomber – "what is the point of creating a plan if there's no money to implement it?"
- Build a Surf Lifesaving Club observation tower on the YCW beach "to spread the load of visitors across two beaches"
- Township boundaries, which are strictly defined under the State Government's Distinctive Areas and Landscape plan
- Road improvements, including further upgrades to the existing "dangerous" intersection between Smiths Beach and Back Beach Roads, as well as sealing gravel roads
- Measures to stop coastal erosion



A second Surf Lifesaving Club observation tower should be installed at YCW beach – "to spread the load of visitors across two beaches" – just one idea mooted following the release of the Smiths Beach Town Plan. Photo: Ramble & Drift Creative.

"because currently at high tide beach users go into the primary dunes"

• Dogs on beach and potential impacts with hooded plover nesting areas

• The potential to expand a marine park off Smiths Beach and

• Make better use of the Mitchell Reserve, "which is currently under-utilised".

Phil said the association did not have fixed positions on these issues, but believed they were the most important to garner community feedback.

"It would be presumptuous of the association to adopt a position on these issues when we haven't canvassed ratepayers," Phil said.

"This was a golden opportunity, to convey to ratepayers that these are the critical issues and we're seeking your feedback, but instead we have missed the opportunity of receiving fully informed responses from the majority of Smiths Beach ratepayers.

"Do ratepayers want gravel roads

to be sealed? Do residents understand the State Government's Distinctive Areas and Landscape plan and its impact on Smiths Beach? Does the community want dogs off leash on the beach?"

Plan details

The plan states Smiths Beach has a population of 226 across 79 dwellings and includes a general store and café, surf shop, two surf beaches (Smiths and YCW) and Mitchell Reserve.

The plan details the need for improvements in the town, explaining "when there is an influx of visitors the infrastructure is placed under pressure".

"During peak season, car parking around the shops and beaches is a challenge and occasionally results in heavy traffic with limited road space," the plan states.

It highlights that Smiths Beach is third on the shire's priority list to seal gravel roads, set to start in the next five

years, funded through resident contribution to a Special Charge Scheme.

"We are asking you to tell us your ideas for Smiths Beach on a combination of initiatives from land use changes to infrastructure provision and activation ideas," the plan states.

"The plan will identify issues relating to the coastal environment, transport infrastructure and recreation facilities within the area and identify key directions and actions for the town."

This year the shire started implementing the separate YCW Beach Masterplan, which was adopted by council in 2014.

This plan upgrades facilities in the car park and foreshore. The first stage has been funded and includes a barbecue shelter, currently in the design phase, with the remainder of the works part of a 10-year program.

Details: 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211 or email strategic.planningadmin@basscoast.vic.gov.au



Graffiti spray painted on the cliffs at Surf Beach on Friday night was quickly removed by Phillip Island Nature Parks staff.

Surf Beach graffiti

Graffiti that appeared on the cliffs at Surf Beach over the weekend was quickly removed by Phillip Island Nature Parks staff.

Local resident Lou Pecora reported the graffiti, saying it appeared sometime between Friday evening and Saturday morning.

"I advised the Nature Parks on Saturday morning at about 11am and to their credit they acted quickly within a few hours to remove the largest piece," Lou said.

The graffiti next to and under the stairs is scheduled for removal in the coming weeks.

The incident was reported to police by Phillip Island Nature Parks.



The vandals also graffitied under the stairs at the entrance to the beach



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Wetland still wasteland

Promises that the proposed wetland at Shoalhaven Estate would be completed by the end of summer have proved false.

Once again, nearby residents are querying how long it will be before the wetland is created.

Since 2014, they have been asking when the empty block will be transformed into the "stunning wetland" described on the developer's website. Lauders Group, the developers behind the Shoalhaven Estate did not respond to the Advertiser's requests for an update on the project.

However both Melbourne Water and Bass Coast Shire Council said the developer had advised them the wet summer had made it impossible to complete the project.

Roy Brooks lives nearby and is frustrated with the lack of progress. "I was previously 'reliably' informed that the wetlands would be completed by the end of summer," Roy said in an email to council.

"Summer has come and gone, autumn has gone and we are two weeks into winter without any apparent progress. Will the excuse be the Coronavirus outbreak?"

Roy said it was frustrating to watch work continue at the other end of the estate, where new sections were being opened up for sale.

"I can only suspect that the Ventnor Road area is Coronavirus free," he quipped.

He said a tradesman working on the site told him work was delayed on the wetlands as council was not "in a position to accept excess water that will be deposited into the bay".

When he raised this with council, an officer told him she was not aware of any issue related to council not accepting excess water.

No progress report

A spokesperson for Bass Coast Shire Council said the developer had been contacted and advised that "works are about to commence on the footpath in Justice and Settlement Roads, to link



Work has again stalled on the proposed wetlands at Shoalhaven Estate, despite previous developer assurances it would be completed by the end of summer.

up the existing footpaths".

"The control pit in the wetland and the pipe connection to the Melbourne Water drain is also programmed to happen shortly," the spokesperson said.

"Due to the wet summer, the contractor will not be able to complete the internal construction until summer this year. As previously advised, the timing of these works is in the hands of the developer."

Roy believes wet weather is just another excuse, saying the developers had years of drought where they could have completed the work.

Last year the developer blamed a lack of appropriately qualified engineers for the project not being completed.

In a statement to the Advertiser, Lauders Group said: "As this project requires the retardation basin to be pumped dry and then cleaned out without any inflows of water from the estate's catchment area, we are faced with a narrow window of opportunity to complete these required works on site, consequently it is a mid-summer timeline that will work best."

"Last summer after extensive pumping, we were required to have one of Melbourne Waters approved

dams engineers to sign off on the project. Unfortunately, there are only a limited number of approved dams engineers available and we were unable to get the project signed off prior to the start of heavy inflows, to the frustration of all concerned."

"This summer we have made every effort to have all of our 'ducks lined up' so that we can have these works completed in the appropriate time slot. Once these are complete the following landscape works will transform the area into quite an attractive area for the benefit of all."

Melbourne Water said recent rain has meant the developer couldn't work on the project.

"Melbourne Water is having regular dialogue with the developer to ensure that the works are completed as soon as possible."

"The developer has resolved any drainage issues previously identified by the council and Melbourne Water."

With Council and Melbourne Water seemingly unable to compel the developer to complete the project, residents look set to endure another 12 months of living next to an unfinished work site rather than a wetland.



Prep students at San Remo Primary had their eyes firmly on the screen during an online workshop with the Australian Ballet.

San Remo Primary pirouettes

The Australian Ballet paid an online visit to San Remo Primary School, running an interactive workshop for students.

Principal Karen Bowker said the ballet presented an "amazing" interactive performance.

"Every grade participated and raved about it."

Ms Bowker said the workshop, held over two days (June 10 and 11) was titled Steamdance, and explored science, technology, engineering, arts and maths through dance.

The sessions included live warm-ups, creative tasks to make dances, movement games and cool-downs.

It also included a Q&A with professional dancers and the opportunity for students to view a professional performance, based on themes of resilience.

"San Remo Primary school chose the performance of 'Wilaygu Ngayinybula/Possum's two minds'," said Ms Bowker.



Grade 5/6 at San Remo Primary enjoyed creating dance moves during the workshops.

"Students from Prep to grade six participated in the online workshop and really enjoyed learning positions, choreography and storytelling through dance."

"Each session guided the students through a warm-up, stretch, choreography and finally a mini performance of what they had learnt."

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Erosion reveals illegal waste

An old, illegal rubbish dump is “spewing” its contaminated waste into Western Port, a result of increasing coastal erosion.

Bass Coast Shire councillors last week called for the Environment Protection Agency to urgently remedy the situation on the Corinella foreshore, and for the state government to provide funding to stop erosion.

Cr Clare Le Serve moved a notice of motion highlighting that an illegal dump had been exposed in recent weeks and months by the erosion of the cliff face on the Settlement Point Corinella Foreshore Reserve.

“The concern is the amount of waste that has slipped down onto the beach and into the sea causing environmental damage,” Cr Le Serve said.

“We know about the extent of coastal erosion through Bass Coast, particularly Inverloch, Cowes east, Kilcunda and Jam Jerrup, but now this has come to light.”

Cr Geoff Ellis seconded the motion saying rubbish about 50 years old was “spewing” into the bay.

“Obviously it was an illegal tip where people would dump stuff like old differentials and tractor motors, it’s terrible,” Cr Ellis said.

“This is the second most urgent matter after Jam Jerrup.”



Shire officers inspected the site in early June and found waste including engine components, glass and clothing along the exposed face of the fill area.

Shire officers inspected the site in early June and found waste including engine components, glass and clothing along the exposed face of the fill area.

“Further erosion of material may result in additional slippage onto the foreshore, which has the potential to expose more waste,” officers noted.

“The percentage of waste material exposed may increase as the erosion progresses, however this will be subject to further understanding of the site. The extent of the fill material is unknown.”

Cr Le Serve called for the council to support the Corinella Foreshore Committee of Management in lobbying the state government and EPA for urgent funds and action, saying the problem was not only because of wave erosion.

“There is a need to slow the run-off of the surface water and revegetate the reserve to help protect this fragile cliff face from further slumps,” she said.

“If this situation is not rectified it will continue to cause further damage to the stability of the cliff face and adjacent properties.”

Dog fight continues

Allegations of dog baiting near Ventnor’s off-leash beach has highlighted a deep divide in the community over dogs on beaches.

Last week (June 17) the Advertiser reported on the lucky escape of Blondy, an Italian Maremma (not a golden retriever as previously reported) who was rushed to the vet after eating what was believed to be a poisoned bait.

Blondy has recovered well from her ordeal and follow up blood tests have shown there is no permanent damage to her liver.

Blondy’s owner Travis Eades said he has approached Bass Coast Shire Council to send a sample of the alleged bait for testing, but will pay for it himself if council decides not to go ahead.

He claimed a similar green mass was found behind the

Cowes boat ramp.

Travis believes a small group of local wildlife enthusiasts may be targeting dog owners and trying to intimidate them.

He has started a Facebook page and is distributing leaflets, to encourage people to come forward if they’ve been approached or threatened by anyone while walking their dogs.

He’s offering a \$1000 reward for anyone providing information that leads to a conviction.

Meanwhile police investigations continue into the alleged poisoned bait incident.

However other residents have contacted the Advertiser expressing concern about the behaviour of dog owners, saying many don’t properly restrain their dogs.

One woman, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of

reprisals, said “there is a bigger issue at play” and that she often sees people with their dogs off-leash outside the designated off leash area.

“The dogs run off into the bushes and they are often out of sight of their owners,” she said.

With debate raging on social media, last week the Phillip Island Conservation Society posted information about the Victorian Domestic Animal Act on their Facebook page.

“PICS would like to share a few links to help dog owners understand the current Victorian legislation and the current Bass Coast Shire regulations about dogs.”

The post advised dog owners to consult council’s Local Law No. 1 for “details on acceptable behaviour”, noting that any abusive comments on the post would be removed.

SHORT STACK

A quick roundup of news, views and opportunities

Sports grants extended

The Victorian Government’s Community Sport Sector COVID-19 Survival Package cut-off date has been extended to 30 June 2020.

The grants are designed to help clubs to meet costs to ensure they can remain operational and ready to return to play as coronavirus restrictions are gradually eased.

Further information on the club, league and association grants can be found at sport.vic.gov.au/grants-and-funding/our-grants/community-sport-sector-coronavirus-covid-19-short-term-survival-package

Australia Post community grants

Applications are open for the 2020 Australia Post Community Grants program.

Up to \$10,000 is available to each recipient. Applications must be from not-for-profit community organisations and close on July 17.

This year there is an emphasis on supporting projects that help improve connection and mental wellbeing in local communities.

The program will support initiatives that:

- Support mental health awareness and early intervention to help people understand more about how to stay mentally well
- Increase opportunity for individuals to participate and connect within their communities

Strengthen connections to mental health support services

To apply visit www.auspost.com.au/grants.

Get Active

GippSport is encouraging everyone to get physically active on the first weekend of July. They’re hosting a free virtual event, and by entering you go in the running to win some great prizes - including a FitBit or \$200 sports vouchers. Find out more or register at gippsport.com.au/gippsport-virtual/

Buckle up

An ad originally created in 1992 is returning to TV, after a rise in the number of deaths involving people not wearing seatbelts.

Last year, 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt – nearly 30% of all fatalities and the highest rate since 2012. That trend has continued this year, with no seatbelts a factor in 11 of the 99 deaths on our roads.

The TAC’s latest Road Safety Monitor survey into driver behaviour indicates that potentially 170,000 Victorian drivers do not always wear a seatbelt when they get in the car.

23 June 2020



THANK YOU

An open letter to the staff of Phillip Island Nature Parks

On behalf of the Board, Executive, Staff and Volunteers at Bass Coast Health, I would like to say thank you to the staff of Phillip Island Nature Parks for so many things that you’ve done to support us this year. Thank you,

- For answering our call for help during the COVID-19 Pandemic preparation; while your business was slowing, we were very worried ours was about to boom and you came to our aid so quickly.

- For working with us (at the peak of our Pandemic preparation) 7 shifts a day, 7 days per week, strengthening our service to our community, and making our service safe.

- For being adaptable, accepting the challenge, learning so much about Bass Coast Health, working in a health service, COVID-19, hand hygiene, and the importance of contact tracing and sanitiser.

- For caring, putting in, doing your best as you greeted our staff, visitors and clients as if they were your own.

- For being a friend to us, and partner organisation in so many other ways, including the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network, where you have provided such strong and visible leadership.

Whether or not you were working with us at BCH over the past weeks, partnerships like ours don’t happen without commitment, vision and hard work. Thank you sincerely for all that you’ve done, for us and your community.

Yours faithfully,

Jan Child
Chief Executive Officer



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Changing Places

Elizabeth Davie of Going Places Travel says the travel industry is facing its biggest challenge and expects it will be changed forever after COVID-19.

"I love travel and it's my livelihood," said Elizabeth, who has worked in travel for 36 years.

"The industry has been devastated. It was affected so early on and will probably be the last to recover."

Many people have been impacted by the closure of borders and shutdown of airports and hotels, with future holiday plans in disarray, while others desperately scrambled to get back from overseas.

But few have an insight into the impact the global pandemic has had on the travel industry.

"It's not as easy as someone saying - 'I couldn't do my trip, so refund me everything'," she explained.

"We have to work with thousands of policies, tour operators and airlines. Money from deposits is automatically paid out to the supplier to secure the client's trip and it filters through from there to hold itineraries on the ground, likewise final balances. It is not a simple process to 'get it back'. This crisis has had such a devastating effect on so many people around the globe."

The length of time it takes to process refunds has been a source of frustration for both agents and their customers, but fortunately her clients have been incredibly understanding.

"We've been here for 25 years and have a strong relationship with our clients and they appreciate how hard we are working for them."

Despite the decimation of the travel industry, Elizabeth said the past few months have been busier than ever.

"I'm reading posts from friends saying they're learning to knit or taking up painting during lockdown, while we have been working 12-hour days."

"We have cancelled a frighteningly large number of forward bookings."

"It's awful being stuck in the middle, between clients and tour operators or airlines. It takes so long to unwind, but refunds are starting to flow through now."

Working around the clock with no money coming in is putting everyone in the industry under enormous pressure.

"We still have all our monthly expenses. That's scary with zero income," Elizabeth said.

"I do feel sad for the industry as a whole as it can be misunderstood, and many people don't understand just how hard people are working under such difficult circumstances with skeleton staff to get the best possible outcomes."

While she considers herself very lucky, she said the shutdown caused by the virus was "such a shock", with the situation getting worse each week.

"My business, which I'd built up over 30 plus years, disappeared over night."

There was no time for self-pity though, as Elizabeth and her team scrambled to get all their clients home safely.

"First up, the priority was to get all our clients who were overseas



Elizabeth Davie of Going Places Travel said the travel industry has been devastated by the global Coronavirus pandemic.

home," she said.

"I was staying awake during the night, contacting people and saying you have to get home now."

"We did manage to get everyone home before the borders closed. It was frightening the speed it happened. It changed hourly. Those first couple of weeks were a horrible blur."

Uncertain future

With the prospect of international

travel still a long way off, Elizabeth predicts travel within Australia will open first, followed by New Zealand and then the Pacific.

"I think everyone will have to adapt to a new kind of travel. It's going to take two or three years to recover and may never be like it was."

Having weathered storms before - including MERS, SARS, the collapse of Ansett and 9/11 - Elizabeth said the travel industry is resilient and

will return.

"It will just be a different way of operating. This is an opportunity to re-evaluate what we do and how we do it."

She believes her popular hosted tours will be a big part of the company's future.

"It's a part of the business I've developed over 15 years and we normally take away three tours a year."

"I love it, it's a part I really enjoy. We have a ball."

In the past, Elizabeth has taken small groups on trips to destinations around the world, including Scandinavia, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Norfolk Island and the Kimberley to name just a few.

She says the tours will continue.

"We will focus on tours within Australia and Victoria initially and as the borders open, we will expand."

Celebrations on hold

In March this year, Elizabeth had planned a big celebration of 25 years in business, but that was also a casualty of the pandemic.

The invites were ready to be sent out, but now everything is on hold.

On the night of the planned party, "I ended up sitting by the fire reflecting with a glass of wine," Elizabeth said.

"We're taking this opportunity to implement an array of fantastic changes, that I've wanted to incorporate into the business for years."

"At the moment, we're hibernating and working remotely as we follow government guidelines, but we will be opening by appointment in the coming weeks."

Locals on tour with Going Places



Norfolk Island, 2019



Kimberley 2018



Japan 2016



Vietnam/Cambodia, 2014



Red Centre 2019



Mauritius



Sri Lanka



European River Cruise 2014



Canada/Alaska 2019



Elizabeth Davie and a group of 21 locals set off on a tour of Egypt in March and got caught up in the global pandemic.



The group encountered a sandstorm in Abu Simbel and their holiday plans started to unravel.



When the borders to Jordan closed, the tour was cut short and the group returned to Australia, but they completed the Egyptian section of the tour.

Escape from Egypt

As the coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe and countries began to shut their borders, Elizabeth Davie, of Going Places Travel in Cowes, was hosting a group of 21 locals around Egypt.

Sounding more like a script from an Indiana Jones film than a normal holiday, the group faced sandstorms, floods, border closures and a global pandemic before they arrived safely back in Australia.

The group set off on their tour of Egypt and Jordan at the start of March. "When we left, COVID-19 was just starting to impact Italy but there were no cases in the Middle East," said Elizabeth.

"I was conscious of it but felt it was contained. It wasn't particularly well understood over there, but we were being cautious, using hand sanitiser and observing social distancing."

Everything was fine until they arrived in Luxor for their Nile cruise. They found out there had been a COVID-19 outbreak on a previous cruise

and Elizabeth admits at that point, she started to worry.

"I didn't have a real sense of the severity of what was happening, although I knew the girls in the office were dealing with a lot of changing policies. No matter where you travel there is a sense of removal – it was difficult to grasp how quickly it escalated around the world.

"We were having a ball. It was a Travelmarvel tour and I was in constant contact with them and monitoring the situation. I didn't feel we were unsafe."

When they left their cruise for a half day tour of the tombs in Abu Simbel, things took a turn for the worse.

Flying into the remote village near the border with Sudan, they encountered a massive dust storm, referred to by the locals as a "dragon storm".

The storm shut the airport leaving the group with no way to return to their boat and belongings.

"We were stuck there in the middle

of nowhere. Our luggage was still back on the boat on the Nile, so our Tour Director decided to organise a bus back to Aswan," said Elizabeth.

"We had a police convoy, but were turned back after one hour as there was too much sand covering the road."

The intrepid travellers ended up in an Abu Simbel hotel – "covered in sand" and spent the night, before boarding the bus again at 4.30am the next morning for the six-hour drive to Aswan.

The itinerary had the group then flying to Jordan, but floods closed the airport, leaving them stranded for seven hours.

In those seven hours, the border to Jordan closed.

Suddenly the fun-filled holiday turned into a race against time as Elizabeth worked frantically to get her tour back to Australia.

"I had to get 22 people home from Cairo," she explained.

"I was awake for two nights and pulled in every contact I had. I realised

how crucial it was to get everyone home. Back in the Cowes office Chloe frantically rebooked flights and re-issued tickets."

The rest of the party enjoyed two nights in a hotel in Cairo and had a chance to catch their breath, but there was no rest for Elizabeth, who described the two days as "very stressful".

In the end, they flew out on March 15, and Cairo airport closed two days later.

"No one had a sense of panic while we were there. The group were amazing, they never once complained."

"I don't think anyone was ever worried, they knew I had my finger on the pulse."

"They had a ball. We completed the Egypt part of the trip, which was an incredible experience to be part of."

The group arrived home before the mandatory government hotel quarantine rules kicked in, so everyone went into self-isolation at home.

"We were all okay and we were very

careful. We went into self-isolation and took that very seriously."

Going Places Travel managed to get the tour group home without having to pay exorbitant change fees and Travelmarvel provided refunds on the unused parts of the tour.

Elizabeth said the current crisis has reminded people that having a travel agent means you have someone in your corner, "who knows the right person to call".

"It's a bit like insurance – it's not until you use it that you really appreciate it."

Clients on the Egypt trip really did have the holiday of a lifetime and have told her how grateful they were for all she did to get them home safely.

"One of my regular travellers told me she wasn't worried at all, because she knew I was doing the worrying for them."

"Every trip I do, I'm relieved everyone is safely home when we come over that bridge. This time, I was hugely relieved!"



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Thank you to all our wonderful travellers for your continued support. We look forward to creating many more holiday memories with you.

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TRAVEL



Crime statistics stable

The annual crime statistics up until March 2020 have been released by the state government.

It's good news for Bass Coast, with only 0.5 per cent increase on last year. In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 1793 incidents recorded in Bass Coast, up from 1784 last year.

Breaches of family violence orders and criminal damage were up, while other thefts had dropped.

The overall incident rate per 100,000 population was well below the Victorian average.

Acting Senior Sergeant Colin Shepherd said it was a pleasing result, and crime rates had fallen in the three months since March.

"Overall, crime in Bass Coast has decreased in the 12 months up to the end of June," he said, attributing the lower figures to a range of factors.

"Summer is not as busy as it used to be, with the changing focus at New Year's Eve to family friendly activities.

"We no longer seem to be the party destination for young people."

He congratulated the council and community on the work done to increase the focus on families at the busiest time of the year.

Cowes remained the second highest location for recorded incidents, though the number was down from last year.

The top five locations were Wonthaggi, Cowes, Inverloch, North Wonthaggi and Cape Woolamai.

Breach of family violence orders and theft were the top two offences across the shire.

While the statistics provide a detailed breakdown of incidents across the shire, Snr Sergeant Shepherd said people should not be alarmed.

"We do live in one of the safest areas in Victoria.

"But the community can assist in investigations by reporting any suspicious behaviour. We rely on and



A breakdown of the top 5 locations, suburbs and offences for Bass Coast in this year's crime statistics.

appreciate community assistance in crime investigations and reporting."

Crimes and charges

This year's figure of 1793 was the first overall rise since 2017.

The statistics show charges were laid in 38.3 per cent of cases. In 20.1 per cent of cases, no charges were laid, while 41.6 per cent of cases remained unsolved.

Snr Sergeant Shepherd said there were a range of reasons why charges might not be laid.

"It depends on the availability of evidence, the availability of witnesses and if we have evidence that is admissible in court.

"Sometimes there's not enough details for us to have avenues of investigation, or we have exhausted the avenue of investigation and come to a dead end."

He said police did not want to take action on an incident until they believed it could be proven in court.

"We can't get a second bite at the cherry."

However he reassured the community that police don't close off cases – they remain open unless solved.

"We are always positive about solving crime. We don't move on. Nothing is brushed away," he said.

Snr Sergeant Shepherd said police were working to improve their communication with victims of crime, to try and provide "constant reassurance that we are still working on it".

"Supermarket for criminals"

Theft and burglary figures in popular beach and boating areas reflect the number of thefts from motor vehicles, with the police describing beachside car parks as almost a "supermarket for criminals".

permarket for criminals".

"They know there is going to be a congregation of cars, many with valuables in them, unattended for a period of time," said Snr Sergeant Shepherd.

"It's a constant message from us – don't leave valuables in the car, don't leave them unlocked."

He said busy boat ramp carparks were also targeted by thieves.

Theft from properties – stealing plants, lawn mowers, push bikes – is also reflected in the figures.

"It's a good reminder not to leave things in plain view. We have a spike on push bike thefts every year over summer."

Breaches

After theft, the biggest category for crime in Bass Coast is breaches of orders.

Snr Sergeant Shepherd said the

high figures reflected the concentrated effort to address issues of family violence.

"There are more reports, more follow ups and intervention orders are much more common."

Unfortunately, more intervention orders translates to more breaches he said, but on a positive note, people are more comfortable reporting family violence incidents than in the past.

"We encourage that, and we want people to come forward and report these incidents. We're happy to have an increase in our figures if it keeps people safe."

He said breaches of an order did not always mean a physical or verbal fight.

"It could be someone's ex-partner calling them, in contravention of an order. That's recorded as a breach and as a Family Violence incident."

He said any breaches of a community corrections order would also appear in these figures.

Stats at a glance

Breakdown by principal offence:

Theft	818
Breaches of orders	533
Burglary/break in	404
Property damage	320
Stalking/harassment	110

Investigation status:

Charges laid	687
No charges laid	361
Unsolved	745

Incidents by postcode Phillip Island:

Cowes	324
Cape Woolamai	61
San Remo	52
Ventnor	34
Newhaven	31



The Cape Kitchen has put in an application to construct a bore, as part of plans to create a hot springs at the site.

What, a bore?

An application to construct a 900m bore at 1215 Phillip Island Road, Newhaven and extract 20 megalitres of groundwater has been lodged with Southern Rural Water.

1215 Phillip Island Road is the address of The Cape Kitchen, which has plans to create a hot springs and wellness centre adjacent to the existing restaurant.

A spokesperson for Bass Coast Shire Council confirmed there was a current planning permit for the development of a hot springs at the site.

While council is aware of the application, a spokesperson said it would not be making a submission.

Southern Rural Water confirmed the proposed bore would be approximately 900 metres deep and was a hot water bore, from an aquifer that is deeper than used in agricultural bores.

The proposal is to source the water from an "unincorporated groundwater management area" which means there is no limit on how much water

can be extracted from the aquifer.

A local water management engineer said in a farming context, 20 megalitres (ML) of water is considered a "relatively small" volume of water, the equivalent of about 20 Olympic swimming pools.

They said 20 ML would be adequate to run a dairy and water stock, but it would only be enough to irrigate two or three paddocks. Installing a 900m bore could potentially cost in excess of \$1 million, they estimated.

The Cape Kitchen did not respond to our request for comment.

Southern Rural Water said the public consultation process included a 28-day period for stakeholder agencies, neighbours and interested parties to make submissions. Submissions on the proposal will be accepted until 4pm on July 8.

The application and submissions are then formally submitted for decision. Interested parties are notified of the decision and have the right of appeal.



Gus Oats proudly displaying his STEM project, part of a 10-week unit completed by grade three and four students at San Remo Primary.



Tessa Marks with her balloon pop game, created as part of a STEM project at San Remo Primary.

Fun and games with STEM

The grade three and four students at San Remo Primary School have recently completed a 10-week unit on STEM.

"STEM integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics into the school curriculum," explained Principal Karen Bowker.

"The program encouraged our children to problem solve, to analyse, to be creative, to work within teams, as well as promote independent thinking."

The children's STEM task was to research, plan and develop an 'arcade' game.

"Their games were made out of recyclable materials, sourced by themselves from around their homes," said Ms Bowker.

"The task also included a business plan – the planning and development of a business name and logo.

"Drawing up plans played a big part, as did trial and error. Once games were complete, the students needed to reflect on their build and the game's success. Changes were



Asha Payne proudly displays her "Holes for Goals" creation.

continually made, to improve the effectiveness of their games.

"We had games of skill and games of chance built. They were colourful, inventive and included fantastic 'student-made' mechanisms."

The school celebrated the completion of the STEM project, with grade three and four inviting the rest of the school to come and play their games.

"It was a big success and great fun was had by everyone," said Ms Bowker.



A proposed landscape design for the roundabout at Cape Woolamai – part of \$113,000 allocated by council for landscaping the two new roundabouts.

Glam roundabouts for island entry

Phillip Island's two new roundabouts – at Cape Woolamai and Back Beach Road – will be given \$113,000 facelifts.

The roundabouts, currently under construction by Regional Roads Victoria (RRV), were set to be plain concrete, but Bass Coast Shire councillors last week voted to allocate the funds as part of plans to spruce up the island's entrance.

The draft 2020/21 budget – also released last week (see separate story) – allocates a total of \$200,000 for the entrance project, with \$113,000 to the roundabout landscaping and the remainder going to new signage.

A group of residents has pushed for a makeover to the entry for seven years, with the shire last November hiring consultant Steve Wallbrink to design landscaping concepts. "The Entry to Phillip Island Project is an opportunity to develop a sense of arrival to Phillip Island that reflects its natural environment, culture and status as a premier tourism destination," shire officers stated.

Cr Stephen Fullarton said he was "shocked" that RRV's

multi-million-dollar budget to create each roundabout did not include landscaping.

"I'm happy to have it allocated now so once it's finished it is presented as well as can be," he said.

Cr Fullarton said current driving conditions at the roundabout were dangerous and he had urged RRV to "rectify" immediately.

"It's currently not the safest turning point."

Cr Michael Whelan said drivers' expectations of the landscaping design shouldn't be too high.

"Because at the end of the day the roundabouts are road infrastructure and safety is paramount," Cr Whelan said.

"The designs are good within constraints."

Once completed, annual maintenance of the roundabouts will cost about \$66,000 – including weeding, mowing and any vandalism repairs – to be paid for by the shire.

Island resident Deb Holland has pushed for a makeover to the island's entrance for seven years and said while focusing on the two roundabouts first was a "bit back to front", "it's

better than nothing".

"This is a start because it's important the design flows through," Deb said.

"I think the work to be done on the roundabouts is critical because if we do nothing it will end up looking like suburbia and if it's not done now it would be years before it could be fixed."

"It's important we send a message that this island is something special."

According to RRV, the intersection at Woolamai Beach Road has received a \$10.4 million upgrade and will include a new dual-lane roundabout, new street lighting, footpaths, relocated bus stops and improved pedestrian crossing infrastructure.

Construction is expected to be complete by early-2021.

The intersection at Back Beach and Phillip Island roads will have its existing Y intersection replaced with a dual-lane roundabout to improve access and safety.

This project will cost \$8.75 million and is expected to also be complete by early next year.

Details: regionalroads.vic.gov.au.

Water plan sets management course

Bass Coast Shire Council voted to adopt the Integrated Water Management Plan 2020 – Strategy Document (IWMP) at its June Council Meeting.

Council said the IWMP identifies its role as a responsible stormwater manager and water consumer and outlines a commitment to work with the water sector and the community to better plan, manage and deliver water to the Bass Coast community.

Council also said forecast development growth in Bass Coast creates significant stormwater-related considerations.

"Taking an Integrated Water Management approach will assist Council to address stormwater issues and plan for potable

water supplies and wastewater management," a Council media statement said, noting the IWMP established six strategic objectives relating to Council's role in the water cycle.

Bass Coast Shire Mayor, Cr Brett Tessari said the value of an Integrated Water Management planning approach lies in its consideration of the entire water cycle.

"Another significant benefit of developing an IWMP is the strengthening of relationships between Council and water authorities and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning," Cr Tessari said.

"It will also allow us to gain an insight into how other regions manage water sustainably and

develop their projects."

The Mayor said by adopting the IWMP – Strategy Document as a first step, Council is setting the strategic objectives for integrated water management in Bass Coast. The next step will be to review and endorse the IWMP - Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan will identify projects, partnerships and funding opportunities in Bass Coast to achieve objectives identified in the Strategy Document.

Cr Tessari said some of these project opportunities are already well advanced, such as the Pioneer Bay road and drainage upgrade project, in partnership with Melbourne Water.

Arts grants for island

An artist and an author from Phillip Island are among the 400 creative workers who received grants from the Creative Industry funding announced by the state government last week.

Anthony Lloyd from Cape Woolamai received \$5000 to create a series of online instructional videos on the studio painting process, as a resource for artists, curators and students.

Author Chris Flynn, who recently released his third novel "Mammoth" received \$5000 to help tour and promote the book online via digital platforms.

The government announced more than \$2.4 million in grants to support Victorian creative workers, organisations and micro-businesses, saying the funding would help the sector to rebuild and bounce back from the Coronavirus pandemic.

The creative industries employ 280,000 people in Victoria and contribute \$31 billion to the state's economy. It is among the hardest hit sectors, with venue closures, screen industry shutdowns and event cancellations leaving thousands of creative practitioners and associated

trades out of work and leading to millions in lost revenue.

The \$4.2 million Sustaining Creative Workers initiative is a quick-response grants program that is part of a \$51.1 million package for the creative industries.

Delivered in partnership with Regional Arts Victoria and Arts Access Victoria, rolling assessments are continuing.

More than 2,500 applications were received over four weeks.

For information on grants and support go to creative.vic.gov.au/grants-and-support



Pat McCabe, Nurse Unit Manager of the Integrated Cancer Unit at Bass Coast Health, is urging people to be tested for bowel cancer.

Be screened for bowel cancer

Bowel cancer is Australia's second deadliest cancer but nearly all cases can be treated successfully when detected early.

June is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month – a Bowel Cancer Australia initiative to raise awareness of the cancer and promote the value of prevention and early diagnosis.

Every week, 103 Australians die of bowel cancer (5,375 people a year).

More Bass Coast Shire residents are diagnosed with bowel cancer than the Victorian average, but 49 per cent of 50-74-year-olds participate in bowel cancer screening, which is also greater than the Victorian average.

According to Cancer Council Victoria, 85 people died from bowel cancer in Gippsland in 2017 and 257 cases were diagnosed. While the risk of bowel cancer increases with age, the disease doesn't discriminate, affecting men and women, young and old.

That's why it's vital people aged 50 and over are tested, said Pat McCabe, Nurse Unit Manager of the Integrated Cancer Unit at Bass Coast Health.

"Early detection is critical. The Cancer Council encourages all people aged between 50 and 74 to perform a free home test every two years," he said.

"With early detection, 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be treated successfully but early detection is crucial to begin treatment as soon as possible."

Testing is free through BowelScreen Australia, and entails taking two small samples of separate bowel motions and returning them by post for screening.

GPs can also offer a faecal immunochemical test every two years to people aged 45-49 who request it.

Talk to your GP or pharmacist about testing through BowelScreen Australia. Order a screening test online at <https://shop.bowelcanceraustralia.org/> or by calling 1800 555 494.

The test can easily be performed at home.

During the early stages of bowel cancer, people may have no symptoms, which is why screening is vital.

As a cancerous tumour grows, it can narrow and block the bowel, resulting in changes to the size, shape and colour of poo. Rectal bleed-

ing may or may not occur.

Reduce your risk

Bowel cancer risk is increased by smoking, eating an excessive amount of red meat (especially when charred), eating processed meats (smoked, cured, salted or preserved), drinking alcohol, and being overweight or obese.

Age, family history, hereditary conditions and personal health history can also influence bowel cancer risk.

People with certain diseases and illnesses are more prone to developing bowel cancer.

These include Type Two diabetes, closely linked cancers such as ovarian or digestive system cancers, and inflammatory bowel diseases including Crohn's and Ulcerative Colitis.

A person's risk category also depends on how many close relatives have bowel cancer and their age at diagnosis.

"People can also reduce their risk of bowel cancer by reporting any unusual bowel habits to their GP, reporting any bleeding to your GP, quitting smoking, eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, limiting red and processed meats, and maintaining a healthy body weight," Mr McCabe said.

Abstaining from or limiting alcohol consumption is also beneficial to reducing one's risk.

Symptoms alert

If you have any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, see your GP. They could be indicative of colon or rectal cancer.

- Blood in your faeces or rectal bleeding
- A recent, persistent change in bowel habit (e.g. diarrhoea, constipation or the feeling of incomplete emptying)
- A change in the shape or appearance of your faeces (e.g. narrower faeces or mucus in faeces)
- Abdominal pain or swelling
- Pain or a lump in the anus or rectum
- Unexplained anaemia causing tiredness, weakness or weight loss.

Mayor's Message

– Cr Brett Tessari

On behalf of Bass Coast Shire Council, I would like to acknowledge that we are saddened and offended at the appalling conduct of the ex-Minister for Local Government towards the Minister for Women. His behaviour was sexist, threatening and totally at odds with the outstanding progress made by Bass Coast Shire Council towards building gender equity and creating a more welcoming and respectful Victoria.

We are an organisation that has zero tolerance for violence or bigotry of any kind. We pride ourselves on developing a culture of inclusivity and respect. We have a longstanding and strong commitment to Preventing Men's Violence against Women and supporting our LGBTIQ community.

It is an absolute disgrace that in 2020, we are still seeing this type of behaviour. We will not stand back and let this behaviour occur, which is why I am delivering this statement, calling it out. We are an organisation that will always call out violence and bigotry when we see it

and will work hard towards the prevention of these behaviours in our community, because there is no place for them.

Moving on, our Draft Budget 2020/21 was released last week, following our June Council Meeting. Under normal circumstances following the Draft Budget's release, we would hold community consultation sessions, but due to the impact of COVID-19 that isn't possible this year.

However, we will be holding a Facebook Q and A session, to give people an opportunity to learn more about the Draft Budget on Tuesday, July 7 at www.facebook.com/basscoastshire, from 6pm to 7.30pm. You can find the Draft Budget on our website at www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/budget, while hard copies will also be made available. Submissions to the Draft Budget can be made in writing by emailing basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au or by mail, addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, Bass Coast Shire Council, PO Box 118, Wonthaggi, 3995. If you wish to speak to your submission, you must advise Council within your email or letter.

The consultation period will close at 5pm on Tuesday, June 21 and submissions will be heard at a Special Meeting of Council at 11am on Wednesday, July 29.

Traders fear imminent closures

Business owners have predicted closures of shop fronts across Phillip Island and San Remo, with an urgent tourism plan required to salvage the industry.

Cheeky Goose's Robert van den Brink said he had already lost \$350,000, adding his doors could close following the end of JobKeeper unless Destination Phillip Island (DPI), the Phillip Island Traders and Business Association and Bass Coast Shire had an industry-wide plan to increase tourist numbers.

"Expenses are still coming, the tap is still running, rent, utilities, insurance, body corporate. We're still losing thousands of dollars a week without a customer base visiting Phillip Island," said Rob, who has had the business for five years and been in hospitality for more than two decades.

"I'm prepared for losses for three months and then I'm done. I don't have the funds to continually sustain losses and I'm not prepared to go into debt to pay bills.

"The full effect of this pandemic will be felt come October, once JobKeeper wage subsidies run out and business have to pay full wages. A lot of businesses I have spoken to here say they'll have to pull the pin once the subsidy finishes."

Rob said there needed to be an urgent joint effort, "coming together to achieve goals", with individual marketing of restaurants, accom-



Businesses like Gullivers in Cowes are under increasing pressure with some owners predicting many businesses will close when the JobKeeper subsidies finish.

modation and other business "not enough".

"Where is the plan? Where is the concerted, single voice uniting everyone for the benefit of everyone? They've had three months to get it done and if a plan isn't ready, why not? What have they been doing since March?"

"Phillip Island needs to focus on Phillip Island and let other parts of Victoria focus on their problems.

"For years there's been a concerted effort to get one market (China). We put all our eggs in one basket and now that's hurting us."

Rob, who pays an annual membership to be part of DPI, said any plan should focus on domestic markets, matching each stage in eased restrictions with a new marketing plan.

"So far I've had the shire ask me

to fill out a survey asking how I was impacted by Coronavirus.

"But the effects of COVID-19 and the recession will be long lasting and are still ongoing. I and many businesses are not coping well. We are all experiencing unprecedented losses."

Usually Cheeky Goose has 12 staff, but is currently maintaining three on JobKeeper.

In a good year, about 40 per cent of the restaurant's customers are international, with just 15 per cent from Phillip Island.

"There's just not enough of a population to sustain businesses from local residents."

Cheeky Goose currently is only offering takeaway, working on a plan to reopen to diners.

"But we're going into winter, our quietest time, and the rules required on sanitation mean that we would have to hire more staff than usual.

"Restaurants here are reporting they're getting angry customers because they will come wanting a table of 10 but rules allow for a table of six."

Red tape

Owner of three hospitality businesses in Cowes Andrew Higgins said he had lost thousands of dollars since the pandemic – including throwing out \$7000 in fresh food at the beginning of lockdown.

Andrew, who owns Gullivers Wine

Bar, said he had very little rent relief from his landlords and qualified for JobKeeper for just six staff, with other staff not working ("because they can get government funding without working").

"Four of my staff come from overseas so I've given them food and housing. What else am I going to do? I can't put them on the street," he said.

"People tend to think everything is going back to normal but I believe the real hit will come later in the year. It's too early to say how we'll go."

Andrew said one of the greatest hurdles to his business had been red tape, including navigating JobKeeper and social distancing restrictions.

He said he had received one call from Bass Coast Shire offering to reimburse a trading fee, but he had not heard back from them or received a reimbursement.

"The shire could help businesses navigate the red tape.

"When lockdown happened none of the businesses had any notice about what was required."

He said last weekend someone informed police that Gullivers was trading with too many customers.

"The police came, scanned the area and left. I'm allowed 20 outside and 20 inside but it's not easy to understand or navigate the requirements and how they change."



Who's at your door?

Phillip Island photographer Claire Davie started her Facebook and Instagram sites *The Doorstep Documentary* at the start of the Coronavirus lockdown.

For the past six weeks Claire has shared some of the hundreds of stories and photos she's gathered with the Advertiser and now – with lockdown slowly easing – this is her last offering.

With more than 200 doorsteps documented, in her last post Claire thanked all the locals for inviting her into their lives.

"I'd like to thank you all, for allowing me, a stranger to most of you, to photograph you through

out the craziness of COVID-19," Claire said.

"Without realizing, you've all provided an immeasurable amount of comfort to the community by proving that we were always all in this together.

"Fortunately, our Phillip Island community hasn't been shaken by the devastating health effects that have been felt all over the world. Instead, for so many of us, this crazy moment in history has allowed us to appreciate what we are all so lucky to have.

"I hope that the immense kindness, compassion and connection that has been shown while the world was turned upside down will continue to be a part of our new normal.

"The Doorstep documentary will stop dominating your newsfeeds now, but it's not over yet! An exhibition and a book are on the way, stay tuned."

The Bott family, Keira, Joel, Leo, Noah and Hutch, Surf Beach:

"Isolation came at the perfect time for us. We just gave birth to our third little boy Hutch in late February.

Everything slowed down at the perfect time and reminding us to really soak up these first few months and connect as a family.

Leo and Noah have enjoyed their daily bike rides, beach hangs and slow mornings.

We're very grateful that Joel is still employed, and although his days are long, our weekends are filled with movies, games, monster truck madness and outdoor roasts by the fire with marshmallows to follow.

We just moved here in December and absolutely love Claire's creativity documenting families on the island.

In a time where you can feel so lonely, this page has helped us to feel connected."

"Frightening situation"

A now retired but former pillar of the Phillip Island business community, Margaret Ellis, has voiced her concerns about the impact of the Coronavirus on local business.

Margaret and her husband ran the Cowes Newsagency for more than 40 years.

During that time, she was a generous and committed and involved supporter of the local community, both through her business and volunteering on many committees.

At 82 years of age, Margaret still takes a keen interest in local business and the community.

"I was in business here for 40 years and I'm upset to see the horrible effect this is having," she said.

"I have got rental properties for two stores and they've been hard hit. I've given them free rent for a couple of months, to try and help."

She said she's worried how local businesses will survive the COVID-19 pandemic.

"How many shops in the main street of Cowes are actually closed," she queried.

"Will they reopen? I have a lot of concerns. The last thing you want to see when you come into a town is a lot of empty shops.

"I feel so sorry for those places that have to close up."

It's not easy for the stores that have remained open either, she said.

"Some people just march up to the counter willy-nilly. They don't seem to care.

"So many just don't understand. This is a very frightening situation. We never saw anything like it and I'm glad I'm not running the show now."

She urged people to help the business community find a solution to get through the crisis.

"We're all in this together. We need to find solutions that are helpful and considered."

As the government winds back restrictions to try and control a recent spike in cases, Margaret said she's heeding all the health warnings.

"I haven't been up the street at all. I've got good neighbours and my daughter helps with the shopping and taking me to doctors' appointments.

"I just stay put in my house."



Margaret Ellis (standing right) is pictured outside the Cowes newsagency in 2003, with local residents, supporting just one of the many community fundraising endeavours that she assisted in her forty plus years running a business in the main street.

Business closures?

Although there have been anecdotal reports of businesses closing down, Destination Phillip Island said it has no reports of business permanently closing due to the Coronavirus.

"As you will see a lot are reopening on June 22 and during school holidays which is good news," said DPI General Manager, Kim Storey.

However, the announcement that the proposed increase to a 50-person limit in restaurants, cafes and pubs would be postponed until July 12 may now see some doors remain closed.

In a DPI survey of 61 local businesses undertaken after the Queen's Birthday long weekend, only 15 per cent reported they were not open.

However some business owners have expressed concerns for the long term outlook saying many could have to close once the JobKeeper payments cease in September (see separate story above).

Restrictions reversed as state infections climb

Still no recorded active cases within Bass Coast

With the number of recorded casing climbing across the state, some easing of restrictions have been postponed.

The number of patrons allowed in cafes, restaurants and bars remains at 20, a huge blow to local venues hoping to operate at increased capacity over the upcoming school holidays.

There are still no recorded active cases within Bass Coast, however neighbouring shires of Casey and Cardinia both have active cases and are among the six key areas the government is monitoring.

In a weekend press conference, the Premier floated the idea of containing hot spots within suburbs or local government areas including Casey and Cardinia.

Keeping safe

Bass Coast Health conducted 187 COVID-19 tests in the past week, bringing the number of tests conducted since April to 2370.

Testing is available at the Phillip Island Health Hub 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Wonthaggi Medical Centre is now undertaking symptom-

atic testing Monday to Friday, and testing occurs at Wonthaggi Hospital for ED presentations, and inpatients.

Anyone with symptoms, however mild, is encouraged to be tested.

In an attempt to restrict rising community transmission, the number of visitors allowed to homes has been scaled back to five.

The government has urged everyone to only leave their house when necessary, practice social distancing, avoid crowds, maintain good hygiene and restrict their interaction with others.

“The more people you see and the more often you see them – the more danger you are putting people in,” the Premier said.

He stressed there were to be no handshakes, no hugs or sharing food or drinks.

The Premier also said people who were feeling sick, should not visit friends and family, go on holiday or go to work.

Anyone who can work from home must continue to do so. The work from home rule will remain in place until at least the end of July.

The state of emergency has been extended for a further four weeks and Victoria Police have powers to enforce the current restrictions and issue on the spot fines. Fines include up to \$1652 for individuals and up to \$9913 for businesses.

In areas without transmission, such as rural areas, the government said it may look at easing restrictions.

Key announcements:

- Number of visitors you can have at home has been reduced to five.
- Outside the home, you can meet in groups of up to 10.
- The 20-person limit for restaurants, pubs, libraries, museums, churches and halls will remain until July 12.
- Gyms, cinemas and theatres can reopen, with a maximum of 20 patrons.
- Community sport for children and non-contact competition sport for adults can begin.
- Accommodation with communal spaces can open, with increased screening and safeguards in place.
- The State of Emergency has been extended to July 19.

Business boost

Twenty-eight businesses in Bass Coast have received full payroll tax refunds from the state government, totalling \$448,849.91.

Member for Bass Jordan Crugnale said the refunds were designed to put money back into the local economy by supporting local businesses get through to the other side of the Coronavirus crisis.

A further 327 local businesses have received a one-off \$10,000 Business Support

Fund grant to help with operational costs. These payments support eligible businesses that have a wages bill below the payroll tax threshold.

Ms Crugnale said the government's Economic Survival Package also includes land tax deferrals for eligible small businesses, rent relief for commercial tenants, and the \$500 million Working for Victoria fund to help workers who have lost their jobs find

new opportunities.

There are currently 101 jobs available in Bass Coast through the Working for Victoria fund. Visit www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria for more information and to register for work.

“The coronavirus pandemic has clearly had a devastating impact on lives and livelihoods – but we’re giving local businesses the support they need to survive,” Ms Crugnale said.

Library doors reopen

Library doors opened again this week, in the second phase of reintroducing services.

West Gippsland Libraries said this phase will include limited access to the library to browse, pick-up holds and

self-checkout, as well as using WiFi, print-on-demand or photocopying.

Live events and regular library programming are still on hold.

Many services can still be accessed online and there

are a range of virtual events and programs on offer.

The library also offers a home delivery service for members without access to the internet. Members can call their local branch to register.

More clubs secure grants

Four more local clubs have secured Community Sport Sector funding from the state government.

Phillip Island and District Basketball, Phillip Island

Pony Club, Cowes Yacht Club and San Remo Bowls will all received \$1000 under the program, designed to help clubs recover from the impact of the Coronavirus.

Last week, it was announced five Phillip Island clubs – the Cricket Club, Football Netball Club, Swim Club, Golf Club and Soccer Club – had received the \$1000 boost.

\$300,000 for Western Port wildlife

Western Port has been given \$300,000 from the Federal government to examine development pressures on bay wildlife.

The funding, which delivers on an election commitment, will be delivered over three years to protect the bay's biodiversity through the biosphere project.

Federal Member for Flinders Greg Hunt said the team at the Western Port Biosphere “do incred-

ible work in protecting and studying our local flora and fauna”.

“The Biosphere will adopt a multidisciplinary approach, communicating with a range of cultural groups and communities on the need to protect the region,” Mr Hunt said.

“This will include forums and seminars to help increase community understanding of the development pressures on mammals, waterbirds and

marine species.”

Biosphere Reserves are recognised by the United Nations, with Western Port including the Ramsar wetlands and endangered international migratory bird species.

The Biosphere's Executive Officer, Greg Hunt, said the funding support would help the Biosphere develop further projects to explore how to meet human needs without damaging the environment.

Council Update



Have your say: Smiths Beach Town Plan

Do you live in or regularly visit Smiths Beach? Then we want to hear from you! We're creating a Town Plan to help strengthen, protect and support the future use and enjoyment of the popular seaside town. We want to know what you consider to be the short, medium and long term priorities for Smiths Beach. Consultation is open until 30 June 2020. To have your say visit www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/smithsbeach or contact our Strategic Planning Team on the numbers below.

Tender

Tender No 20009 – Bituminous Surfacing of Roads

Council is seeking to appoint a suitably experienced Contractor to carry out its annual bituminous surfacing program for local sealed roads within Bass Coast Shire. The contract is for two years, with an extension option of up to three years at the discretion of Council.

Tender No 20010 – Annual Supply of Asphalt

Council is seeking to appoint a panel of suitably experienced contractors for either the supply, or supply and delivery of high quality asphalt for maintenance patching, regulating and edge repair purposes. The contract will be for two years, with an extension option of up to three years at the discretion of Council.

Tender No 20011 – Annual Supply of Quarry and Road Making Materials

Council is seeking to appoint a panel of suitably experienced contractors for the supply and load only and/or supply, load and delivery of quarry products and road making materials. The contract is for three years, with an extension option of up to two years at the discretion of Council.

Tender documents can be downloaded free of charge from <https://basscoast.etenderbox.com.au>. Tenders open 9.00am on Tuesday, 23 June 2020 and close at 2.00pm on Tuesday, 14 July 2020.

Proposed Budget 2020/21

Council has prepared a proposed 2020/21 Budget for the financial year starting 1 July 2020 and ending on 30 June 2021. Council will consider the adoption of these documents at the Ordinary Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 19 August 2020.

The Proposed 2020/21 Budget:

1. Provides for new borrowings of \$17.24 million during the financial year
2. Projects that \$12.5 million of the amount borrowed by Council will be redeemed during the financial year
3. Projects that as at 30 June 2021, the total amount of Council borrowings will be \$20.126 million
4. Projects that the cost of servicing Council's borrowings during the financial year will be \$317,000
5. Proposes that the rate in the dollar for each type of general rate to be levied by Council is:
 - a. Residential Land Rate of 0.30544 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
 - b. Farm Land Rate of 0.24435 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
 - c. Commercial Land Rate of 0.30544 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
 - d. Industrial Land Rate of 0.30544 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
 - e. Vacant Land Rate of 0.45816 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
 - f. Cultural & Recreation Land Rate of 0.18327 cents in the dollar, on Capital Improved Value
6. Proposes the following annual service charges for each property provided with a service:
 - a. Standard garbage charge (includes 240 litre organics, 240 litre recycling, 120 litre landfill bins) \$496.49
 - b. Additional recycling waste bin service charge of \$103.11
 - c. Additional organics bin service charge of \$97.94
 - d. Upgrade existing waste bin (120 litre to 240 litre) service charge of \$57.48

Viewing the proposed Budget 2020/21

The proposed 2020/21 Budget is available online at www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/budget or to have a copy mailed to you please contact our Finance Team on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211.

The proposed Budget is also available to view at:

- Bass Coast Civic Centre (airlock), 76 McBride Ave, Wonthaggi
- Grantville Transaction Centre, 1504-1510 Bass Hwy

Asking questions and having your say

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic we will not be holding any face-to-face consultation sessions. There are still opportunities to ask questions online or over the phone:

- **Facebook** – Tuesday, 7 July at www.facebook.com/basscoastshire from 6.00pm to 7.30pm
- **Over the phone:** Contact our Finance Team on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211
- **Email:** basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au

Under the provisions of *Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989*, any person may make a written submission on any proposal contained in the proposed 2020/21 Budget. Any person lodging a submission may request to be heard in person in support of their submission. Submissions may be made available to the public. Submissions must be received by **5.00pm on Tuesday, 21 July 2020** and be addressed to The Chief Executive Officer, Bass Coast Shire Council, PO Box 118, Wonthaggi VIC 3995. Those persons requesting to be heard in person in support of their submission will have the opportunity to do so at a Special Meeting of Council at 11.00 am on Wednesday, 29 July 2020. This Meeting will be open to the public. The final 2020/21 Budget will be presented at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Wednesday, 19 August for adoption, along with the outcome of any submissions.

Bass Coast Shire Council, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi | DX 34903 Wonthaggi | PO Box 118, Wonthaggi VIC 3995 | 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211 or via the National Relay Service (for people with speech or hearing difficulties) on 13 36 77 | basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tell us your views with a 'Letter to the Editor', (350 word limit). Email advertiser@pisra.com.au

"Pathetic response" to Sunset Strip pleas

We just watched the pathetic response from the Bass Coast Shire Councillors to our pleas to bitumen our roads against the summer dust and winter sludge.

In a matter of minutes council snubbed over 200 Sunset Strip residents by not acknowledging their letters and complaints. Not one word mentioned about our health and safety, core issues.

They voted unanimously to continue the unforgiving mantra of roads, drains, roads, drains and a few foot-paths too.

Cr Fullarton voiced his disappointment that not one road scape has been built on his watch. His dream is to pave Phillip Island, but it's our nightmare.

Cr Fullarton was elected to represent the people, not to live his dreams. While he had 200+ letters from a united community, mostly permanent residents, he claims this issue has been driven by out-of-towners.

Cr Fullarton says there are people in Sunset Strip urging him to get the full road and drainage done. But he hasn't offered any numbers, while he spruiks that everybody 100 per cent loved the made roads after their bank accounts have been slammed for previous special charge schemes.

We are very disappointed in Cr Pamela Rothfield. She has not responded to any phone calls or emails about the conditions we are living in. We wish we had some representation.

Many of us are looking forward to working against the sitting council at the next election.

If local election history repeats itself, there will only be one of you left standing but 'we would like to see a full strike'.

Colleen McGrath and Paul Doherty, Sunset Strip

Contingency and management costs blowout

Three tender projects were presented to the Council meeting on June 17.

Total Project Costs: \$4,348,807.

- Pioneer Bay Drainage Improvement Project cost \$3,817,367

- Demolition of Cowes Cultural and Community Centre cost \$265,630

- Wonthaggi Railway Station Extension and Glazing cost \$265,810

Ratepayers should be concerned when these three projects include a total contingency cost of \$387,440. Contingency costs are usually for unforeseen or unknown additional works once a project is underway.

Why is it our councillors are not expressing concern towards contingency costs when they are so high? Included in the three projects is management cost of \$202,450.

The overall budget positive surplus for these three projects is \$609,414.

Council informs contingency is an approved inclusion used for Capital Works Projects during a budget year.

Ratepayers have contributed \$51,373,000 to council's income for nine months of this financial year 2019-20.

Are contingency costs one way council generates reserves?

Transparency has again taken a backward step (June 17) when councillors approved a financial delegation for the Chief Executive Officer to have the previous authority changed from \$250,000 to \$5 million to expense without having all financial details referred to a Council meeting for councillor debate and approval. That means less than one project out of approximately 130 to 140 will go to a council meeting.

The Financial Delegation Authority of \$5 million would have to be a top election topic. Maybe contingency costs another.

Graham Jolly, Cape Woolamai.

Phillip Island Golf Report

Tuesday June 16 - Mens Stableford

Winner was James Fowler H/c (4) with 37 points from Sean O'Brien H/c (14) with 35 points.

9 Hole Competition winner was Jon Niven with 18 points.

Wednesday June 17 - Ladies Stableford

A Grade Winner - Vicki Roff-Smith H/c(22) - 76 points B Grade Winner - Ros Reid H/c(30) - 77 points

C Grade Winner & Monthly Medal Winner - Zoe Frost H/c(35) - 75 points

Putting Winner was Jeanette Diss with 27 putts

Qualifier for the Silver Spoon was Vicki Roff-Smith

9 Hole Winner - Stableford - Wendy Hamilton H/c(31)

with 19 points

Thursday June 18 - Mens & Ladies Stableford

Winner was Stephen Mack H/c(17) with 40 points from Rob Haydon H/c (11) also with 39 points. 9 Hole Competition Winner was Ron Hateley with 20 points

Saturday June 20 - Mens 4BBB Nett Stroke & J Niven Round 1

Winners were Graeme Niven H/c(33) & Glen Marshall H/c(30) with 62 points nett on a countback from runners Up Lewis Betts H/c(28) & Jim Brown H/c(18) also with 62 points nett.

9 Hole Winner was Steve Rieger with 19 points

Ladies Competition - Ladies Stableford

Winners were Jo Disher



Isaac Batty and Reece Jamieson, the winners of the J Niven 4BBB Stroke Scratch event with a gross score of 74/72. The event was played over the weekend.

H/c(27) & Ada Anglin H/c(16) with 68 points

Runners Up were Judy Magill H/c(22) & Sheryl Smith H/c(23) with 69 points.

Sunday June 21 - J Niven 4BBB Stroke Scratch Event

Winners

Winners were Isaac Batty and Reece Jamieson with a gross score of 74/72 defeating Neville Thurgood and Mark Jamieson - gross score 72/75 One shot!! Well done to all.

Around the Bay

WITH JIM'S BAIT AND TACKLE

To say this year has been challenging for many would be an obvious understatement and just when many were to get back to work in the hospitality industry, another hiccup.

In business you learn to adapt and take challenges head on, but nothing works without support from your customers.

Speaking with other businesses in the area, and speaking from our own business point of view, support has been great and even to those not open fully yet, the texts, calls or emails of support are helping greatly and much appreciated.

As we have seen over the last week or so there is a little bit to go, yet before it's all over, we have also seen what a selfish few can do to many.

While your support is appreciated, we are yet to hit the biggest hurdle for businesses with the predicted cliff to be around September. Continue supporting your local businesses where you can but pace out your support to extend it into the spring and beyond.

Hopefully come Christmas time this will be something we just talk about when sitting at one of the many cafes in the area with friends.

More importantly we can all

do a bit to help ensure everybody still has their door open by then as well.

While the 2020 season has had its challenges, it has come with plenty of unpredictability and if someone had given you this rundown of the season this time last year you would ask them how much they had to drink.

A non-existent summer with only a handful of days over 35 degrees and another handful over 30 degrees.

The best part of the year around here, autumn did not live up to its reputation with a lot of wind and rain plus fishing banned and businesses forced to close.

Most places received their annual rainfall before the winter and then, very little wind, sunglasses, hats and sunscreen needed in June and that's only a brief description of how it has gone so far.

After all of that you have to try and predict the best spot to fish for the day.

The last week has seen another week of opportunity for people to go fishing with perfect weather at times and with the wind dropping off most afternoons there was time for a fish after work if you could get

an early finish.

Like all the season so far it has been those willing to try something or somewhere different or new that have been most successful.

Whiting went a bit quiet over the full moon, but the reports have improved a little.

Where they are catching them hasn't changed with the answer still the same, in the water.

The reports we are getting are coming from almost every whiting spot and if I had to pick one that was slightly better it would be around the Bass river to Maggi shoal.

Every report we received was similar in that it wasn't easy, very few bagged out, the fish sizes were mixed but in good condition.

If you are prepared to look around though, you will get yourself a good feed of whiting, and don't spend too much time in the one spot if you aren't catching fish.

It would appear at the moment you need to go and find them as they are not going to find you.

Berley isn't helping much to bring whiting to you and all it seems to be doing is attracting leatherjackets, toadies and small pinkies.

What will help is a berley pot, quality berley (mashed up pilchards) and when you get your first whiting drop it over to keep them there. You will only

get a short time before the rest show up but from the reports it will definitely help.

We are getting a lot more land-based reports now that we are into the winter with many boats parked up for a few months, the light winds and sunshine is also helping.

Calamari and salmon are the two most targeted fish and the reports of both are about the same. Patchy and small describes both but there are enough around to make you head back to try again.

The calamari reports have come from all jetties, except Rhyll and the beaches at Woolamai and Ventnor. There has been nothing normal to them and the reason plenty are missing out, only fishing what is considered the right time.

Regardless of time or tide if you want to go for a calamari fish just go, that seems to be working for those catching them.

Salmon are small and the same as calamari, those fishing when everything is supposed to be right aren't necessarily the ones catching them.

The reports are all over the place as far as the tides go and while some big schools can be seen while you are standing on the beach the fishing is patchy.

We did have some quality salmon reported, 1kg and better, most were well under the 1kg and it was almost even between lures and bait.

Business Guide

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DEATHS

Bass Coast Historical Automobile Club Inc. (BCHAC)
Jim Beal a highly thought of and enthusiastic member of BCHAC passed away on the 15th June 2020 and will be missed by all. The BCHAC extends its condolences to the family and friends of Jim Beal.

CHAMBERS (nee WUCHATSCH) Beatrice Louise (Trix):
aged 96 years, passed away peacefully on June 15, 2020.
Beloved wife of Karl Lewis (dec.)
Survived by her sister Marjorie Craig.
Beloved mother and mother-in-law of Stephen & Kirsty, David, Elaine (dec.) and Debbie, Janet & Graham.
Much loved Grandma of her many grandchildren and great grandchildren.
Her memory will live in our hearts forever.

Dearly loved sister and sister-in-law of Marjorie and Frank (dec.) Craig.
Loved Aunt of Robert and Anne and their families.
Many treasured memories.

Dearly loved sister-in-law of Frieda and Alan Legg (both dec.)
Loved Aunt of Katrina, Susan and Jane and their families.
Loving memories.

JEFFREY, (nee Hay-Smith) Nola Jeanne:
Most loved wife of Rob. Loved mother and mother-in-law of Andrew and Sherrie, Christopher and Elizabeth.
Loving Grandma to Darren, James and Nicholas.
Forever Loved and Remembered

JEFFREY, Nola:
Passed away 19.06.2020.
Nola – To be your friend during this journey has been an honour.
You have been, brave, resilient, and determined to beat this awful disease. ,
You are at peace now! I will remember you and miss our friendship and our many walks.

WILLIAMS, Hilda:
It is with much sadness Hilda passed on 11th June.
Hilda will be very much missed, condolences to all her family especially Vicki.
PIRSL Day Club.

WILLIAMS, Hilda:
Passed away at home on the 11th of June 2020.
Mum you fought so hard to stay. Our hearts are shattered. Always loved.
Susan, David, Vicki and all your loving family.

PUBLIC NOTICES

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: Weekly meetings Bass Coast Shire, Wonthaggi - Tuesday 8pm; AA Cowes Big Book meeting at St Philip's Church (opp. Coles) - Tuesday 7pm, 0417 317 470; Salvation Army building, McKenzie St., Wonthaggi, Saturday 11am, 5672 3627. Phone head office 9429 1833.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: Weekly meetings Bass Coast Shire: Cowes - Sunday 5-6pm, St Philip's Church (opp. Coles); Wonthaggi - Friday 11am, Salvation Army Hall (149 McKenzie St.). Phone 1300 652 820 or visit na.org.au

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CHURCH NOTICES

Members should check their church websites for details of service times and guidelines.

UNITING CHURCH:
www.cowes.unitingchurch.org.au/minister.php
www.facebook.com/pages/St-Johns-Uniting-Church/828979940479969

BAPTIST CHURCH:
www.islandbaptist.org.au/

HOPE CHURCH:
are emailing members
www.islandhopechurch.com/

CATHOLIC CHURCH:
www.cdsale.org.au/coronavirus
www.cdsale.org.au/prayer-and-reflection

ST PHILLIP'S ANGLICAN CHURCH:

www.anglicanparishbass-phillipisland.org/

www.facebook.com/stphilipscowes/

PHILLIP ISLAND SURF CHURCH:

www.facebook.com/pages/category/Christian-Church/Surf-Church-Phillip-Island-360300548086709/

The LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
Psalm 1:6, ESV

SITUATIONS VACANT

Position Vacancies Bass Coast Health

Bass Coast Health is seeking applications for the following positions:

Registered Nurse Grade 2 – Rehab/GEM/Palliative
Part Time – Closes 26/06/20

Registered Nurse Grade 2 – Anaesthetic, PACU
Fixed Term Part Time – Closes 30/6/20

Registered Midwife – Grade 2 Midwife
Fixed Term Full Time – Closes 3/7/20

Associate Nurse Unit Manager – Kirrak House
Part Time – Closes 3/7/20

For full position details, a position description and how to apply, please refer to the BCH website basscoasthealth.org.au or contact Human Resources via email hr@basscoasthealth.org.au

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Footloose!

This spectacular shot by Gary Parnell from the Phillip Island Camera Club caught surfer Cam Boulton in motion at Cape Woolamai earlier this month. www.garyparnellphotography.com.au.

Hoodies season success

Phillip Island Nature Parks said this year's Hooded Plover breeding season has been a success, in a report released last week.

Nine chicks successfully fledged this season, meaning they were able to leave the nest, fly and survive independently.

This brings the island's population to approximately 43, and the birds' breeding rate is now within the range needed to maintain a viable population.

The tiny birds are popular with residents and visitors alike, with many locals spending hours volunteering to monitor nests and protect the chicks.

The Nature Parks said the ongoing management of these rare shorebirds was a key action in the Nature Parks' Five-Year Conservation Plan and part of their ongoing commitment to protecting and enhancing Phillip Island's threatened species.

"Overall, the breeding season was positive with nine chicks successfully fledging from six nesting sites," said Mitch Burrows, Nature Parks Nesting Shorebird Officer.

"The number of chicks fledged per breeding pair was 0.47 which is comparatively higher than last season and is within the rate of between 0.45 and 0.5 needed to maintain a viable population."

Welcome news

A group which petitioned to establish off-leash areas for dogs in Cape Woolamai said they were pleased at the success of this year's breeding program.

"We would like to believe that this success has happened in coordination with the new off-leash areas giving dog owners a clear and certain area where they can walk their dogs," said group convenor Cheryl Owens.



Nine new Hooded Plovers successfully fledged this season, bringing the island's population to approximately 43.

"The off-leash areas have been extremely successful this year with no incidences or issues and no wildlife harmed at all on our off-leash beaches."

"We are pleased both the shire and the Nature Park are willing to work with us to try new plans and ideas instead of us all just banging our heads against a brick wall and expecting a different result."

Cheryl acknowledged the Nature Parks ongoing support of the off-leash areas and said the group was "particularly pleased that the successful chicks were in April when more people were in fact walking their dogs as this was all there was to do" due to the Coronavirus lockdown.

She said education and changing of attitudes takes time, patience and perseverance, but believes "if we all work together we can create this positive environment for ratepayers and wildlife alike."

Research

Mitch said researchers divided the season into three periods to evaluate effects such as weather events and human interactions.

Despite increased nesting attempts during the pre-Christmas and Christmas periods, the first chicks did not fledge until 17 February 2020 in the post-Christmas period after the effects of summer crowds and unsuitable weather conditions.

COVID-19 provided a reprieve for the birds with fewer beach users due to travel restrictions from March. A further six chicks fledged along the island's south coast beaches in mid-April.

Nature Parks said the reasons for the early egg failures were largely unknown, so the team will undertake more rigorous nest monitoring including the use of camera traps in the future to determine the causes.

Despite volunteer activities being suspended in April to help slow the spread of coronavirus, an impressive total of 750 volunteer hours were contributed during the summer breeding season including two research interns who conducted management and research activities.

The Nature Parks said it worked with volunteers to monitor beaches where Hooded Plovers were nesting and informed beach users, especially dog walkers, of the vulnerable birds and their chicks and encouraged understanding of behaviours to assist in their survival.

The team also noted a rare event when one pair of birds hatched three chicks at Crazy Birds beach at the same time as a pair around the corner at Forrest Caves hatched two chicks.

The Forrest Caves pair walked their two chicks to Crazy Birds where one of the chicks joined up with the Forrest Caves brood. Known as brood amalgamation, this type of event has only ever been recorded once before on Phillip Island.

During winter, the birds take a short break from breeding. They remain on Phillip Island where they may be seen forming small flocks along our beaches.

Since Hooded Plover Watch began on Phillip Island in 1998, the then population of around 20 birds has more than doubled to around 43 individuals, or around 20 breeding pairs through active management, research and ongoing community support.

The success of the program can now provide a model for the management of Phillip Island's other shorebirds such as Oystercatchers and Red-capped Plovers.

A full Nesting Shorebirds report is available at: www.penguins.org.au/conservationnews.

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