

# 'Musseling' in on the ferry tale ending

By Martelle Love

PORTARLINGTON could become the state's mussel capital and a major tourist attraction if a proposal to introduce a festival ferry service across the bay from Melbourne for the annual Portarlington Mussel Festival goes ahead.

Jenny Macaulay from festival organisers, Port Arts Network, said a lot of people traditionally come from Melbourne for the January event. She is now in discussions with the Bellarine Ferry Group about the possibility of providing a ferry service for the day.

"I suggested it would assist us and them and could work quite well. From a tourism perspective, a ferry would be great promotion for our festival and it would be great for the ferry group to promote the potential of the ferry service," she said.

Macaulay said the free, community festival provided the opportunity to promote community activities, music, visual arts, the mussels, wine, cheese and all the Bellarine had to offer.

"Portarlington is a great destination for people to trip down for the day, eat a pile of mussels or take home a pile of mussels and enjoy the country feel of a little fishing village so close to home," she said.

Bellarine Ferry Group secretary John Rae said the group's chairman, Grant Hutchins, was currently investigating the location of suitable vessels and operators that would be available for that day. It is anticipated the ferry would depart from Station Pier at Port Melbourne.

"We as a committee are interested to see how it operates on the day. People will get a taste of not just the famous Portarlington mussels, but also the experience of travelling by ferry between

Melbourne and Portarlington," he said.

Mussel farmer Lance Wiffen of Sea Bounty will be selling fresh mussels, oysters and prawns from the wharf on the day of the festival. He said the ferry option would be "fantastic".

"The only problem would be wharf space. We haven't got a safe harbour yet and it can be difficult on a rough day to berth alongside the pier. That could diminish or restrict the number of boats able to dock at the wharf, but at that time of year there's a good chance the weather will be fine," he said.

Parks Victoria is currently conducting a feasibility study into ferries operating on the bay.

Meanwhile, Member for Bellarine Lisa Neville said work had begun on the second stage of the Portarlington Pier upgrade which will strengthen the pier approach. The work follows on from

strengthening works to increase the pier's load capacity, which is important for the mussel farming industry.

Neville has also encouraged residents and users of Portarlington Harbour to take part in a community consultation process on work Parks Victoria is undertaking to plan for a safe harbour at Portarlington.

"The draft master plan will incorporate the development of new, or the refurbishment of existing infrastructure to meet the increased demand for commercial and recreational boating and promote the town as a place for yachts and boats to safely dock overnight," Neville said.

"I encourage residents and stakeholders to take part in the community consultation process that will take place upon the release of the draft master plan."

## Council to consider community hub

By Martelle Love

A PROPOSAL for a new \$11 million Leopold community hub will be considered by the City of Greater Geelong at its council meeting tonight.

Cheetham ward councillor Rod Macdonald said he had strong support from his fellow councillors and was hopeful that the proposal would move forward.

"The concept plan is quite detailed and extensive and designates all the possibilities for facilities that are missing in Leopold, from the needs of youth through to families and senior citizens. It is a wide-ranging proposal that meets the entire community's needs," he said.

While some residents have voiced their concern that the hub will include private housing, Macdonald said that community the models around the world suggest that it's

important to have people in places at all times of the day and not just during business hours.

"It also adds to the vibrancy of a locality," he commented.

"We will be looking at the layout, the construction and looking to reduce energy use and obviously operate with the lowest carbon footprint we possibly can. There is also the possibility of a windmill on the roof to utilise the wind to generate power for some model projects."

Funding for the design work and planning is already provided in this year's council budget. The funding model relies on developer contributions, as well as financial input from state, federal and local government.

"Importantly, with the amount of growth that is happening in the town, there is significant scope for developer contributions to these community facilities," Macdonald added.



Cr Rod Macdonald at the site of the proposed community hub

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