PENGUIN LOOKOUT AT CAPE NORTHUMBERLAND CLOSED

The District Council of Grant has determined that the penguin lookout at Cape Northumberland is a high risk for visitors to the area and is now closed to the public.

A recent report by geotechnical engineers assessed the coastal stability of the area due to the erosive nature of the coastline from the wind and waves. The report found that the main element of concern was the penguin platform which is at risk of collapse and presents a safety hazard. Included in this report was an assessment of the main access road to the platform, which has also been deemed unsafe and will now permanently have in place restricted road access for vehicles, unless there is an emergency situation that deems it absolutely necessary for a vehicle to utilise the road. Council will also install railing across the space where the road narrows as well as new warning signs.

The penguin platform was constructed in 2001 with grant funding from the Tourism Infrastructure Fund at a cost of $74,000 to allow visitors to the area a place to view the penguin colony. Unfortunately over time the penguin colony has been decimated by foxes and dogs and advice sought from the Department of the Environment indicates that the penguins will not return to colonise the cove.

The Works Department at Council will be coordinating the removal of the platform and the implementation of other safety measures such as signage and railings to restrict access to the cliff edges.

The Cape Northumberland area has a rich history and significant environmental value. The community vision for the area, captured in the Port MacDonnell Masterplan, suggests integrating a coastal walking path around the Cape Northumberland area. The prospect of this will need to be further investigated, and Council staff may look to develop new tourism opportunities as a result of the changing coastal environment.

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