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**SERIOUS FUN:** Will Hawke's smile said it all. His first ride on a swing chair was clearly a highlight of his visit to the Mary Help of Christians School fete on Sunday. The school grounds at Toormina were swamped by about 5000 people of all ages and from as far afield as Kempsey, Tamworth and Grafton for what acting principal Mary Walsh described as a "wonderful community event which exceeded all expectations". Proceeds will go towards providing facilities and resources for learning at the school.

PHOTO: LEIGH JENSEN

**BUDGET ALLOCATOR: Little interest shown so far**

# Speak up on service levels

ONLY 70 people have so far completed the budget allocator survey to tell the council what public services they might want to see cut back, maintained or extended and whether or not they are prepared to pay more for those services.

"That's 70 people out of a possible 70,000," said the council's director of city infrastructure services, Ben Lawson.

"But any changes we make to the level of services we provide will affect everyone, not just one in 1000 people."

The council will host a stall at the Coffs Coast Growers Market tomorrow from 9am to 2pm to get more people

interested in taking part in the budget allocator survey.

The survey closes on October 29.

"Council is fully aware that we cannot keep up our current level of spending indefinitely," Mr Lawson said. "We've got backlogs of millions of dollars in repairs and renewals of some of the \$2bn worth of public buildings, roads, playgrounds and other infrastructure we look after - the result of over 30 years of State Government rate-pegging and cost-shifting by both state and federal governments."

The budget allocator is on the council's website.



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## Enlightening view

FROM PAGE 1

experience which has given me a different perspective on life," Russ said.

"Climbing the mountain and meeting the people of Tanzania reminded me of how simple life can be and how lucky we are here in Australia."

Russ said reaching the 5895m summit and enduring temperatures which plummeted to minus 15°C was more difficult than he imagined.

"It is said that you find something of yourself when you climb Kili. For me it was about realising how much you can push yourself physically, mentally and emotionally."

For Steve the adventure has re-kindled a childhood dream to climb many mountains.

"It was initially an opportunity to get fit and do something for charity but ascending the mountain was such an intense experience I just want to do more climbing," he said.

The contingent of 16 Australians and one American used the six-day climb to raise \$83,000 for the Make A Wish Foundation.

"As the father of three healthy boys it was humbling to meet some of the Make A Wish families ... you get an understanding that we are all sometimes stuck on material achievement and possessions," Steve said.

For Russ a note from his daughter summed up the adventure. "The note said 'You don't climb a mountain so the world can see you. You climb a mountain so you can see the world'. It is so true."

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Yellow Card Traffic Control Grafton 30 Oct, Coffs 5 Nov .....	\$240	Cert IV Training & Assessment TAE40110 .....	\$1000
Red Card Traffic Control Coffs 21, 22 Nov .....	\$360	Certificate II in Aviation .....	\$1500
Work Near Overhead Powerlines Coffs 30-31 Oct.....	\$330	Certificate III in Fitness .....	\$1600
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From the Mayor's desk with...

# DENISE KNIGHT



## Time to have your input into council's budget decisions

TIME is running out for you to have your say about the level of services you want Coffs Harbour City Council

to deliver.

The council is looking at areas where it can deliver services more efficiently but we also need to consider what we allocate to a range of services.

We have created an online tool which allows you to pick and choose the levels of money spent on services we offer to the community - you can choose to spend more, the same, or less than council's current levels.

Go to our budget allocator at <http://chcc.budgetallocator.com/> or find the link on council's website.

Just look for the big purple button on the home page.

The survey closes on October 29 and I look forward to your input.

Whatever the goal, the great thing will be the fact that a group of people have come together and made something happen for their fellow residents.

Applications close on November 29 - go to the council's website for more details.

### Mayoral ball

The Coffs Harbour Mayoral Ball is a chance to get all glammed up "a la the 1920s" and raise money for a very worthy charity.

The ball is on November 30 at Novotel Pacific Bay Resort and all profits go to the educational pathways program provided by Ronald McDonald House for local children battling long-term illness.

Entertainment includes acrobats, dancers, a string quartet plus a rock band - Paul Christie's Rockhouse.

I am really looking forward to people getting into the spirit of the decadent 1920s and channelling their inner Gatsby or Daisy Buchanan.

Tickets are \$165 plus booking fee and are on sale through the Jetty Memorial Theatre's website and its box office.

Go to [www.jettytheatre.com](http://www.jettytheatre.com) for more details.

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### Helping the community

Are you a community group looking at creating new or refurbishing facilities that benefit the community?

The council recently started a community capital infrastructure grants program which will have \$100,000 available for 2013/14, increasing to \$300,000 in 2016/17.

Your idea may be something as big as building a new community hall, creating public art or giving a playground a facelift.



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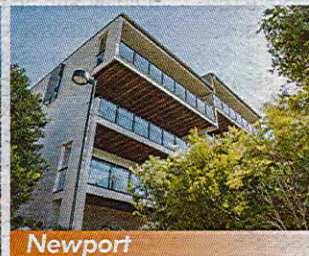
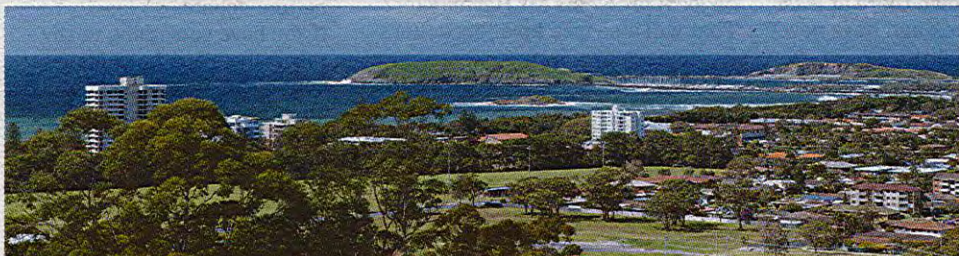
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BRILLIANT BUSKERS: Thrills and spills wow the school holiday crowds

# Magic week winds up

AFTER a week of brilliance, the Coffs Harbour International Buskers and Comedy Festival winds up tomorrow.

Producer John Logan hopes it finishes with a bang.

"After a tough few years with the weather, it's really opened up for us. It's been a fantastic event so far," Mr Logan said.

"A festival of this stature is very important for this area. People say that event tourism is critical to the area and I would have to agree with that."

**“A festival of this stature is very important for this area.”**

— John Logan

For many, one of the standout acts was The Amazing Cal and his energetic take on acrobatics.

The Brisbane-based entertainer and graduate of the National Institute of Circus Arts was delighted with the response of the local audiences.

"I've been here before and absolutely love the place," Cal said.

"I started my first show when I was about 15 and did that for a year or two, then went back to solo work and that's what I've



**FINAL CALL:** The Buskers Festival wraps up after a successful week which had The Amazing Cal end up on a high. PHOTO: TREVOR VEALE

been doing for the past five years.

"Busking was always on my mind, but it was never a career option.

"When I finished high school a few years ago, it was either part-time work, or busking, so

busking it was – it has just been awesome."

Cal is on the road again but a fantastic line-up of artists is due to take centre stage this weekend, including Acrobatica, Jeremy Penquin and Ding Dong Yvonne Calling.

### LAST SHOWS

**Saturday, September 28**  
City Centre, 9am–1.30pm  
Coffs Central, noon–2.30pm  
Moonee Tavern, 6.30–9pm  
Botanic Gardens, 6–7pm  
**Sunday, September 29**  
City Centre, 10.15–11.30am  
Harbourside Markets, 9am–1.30pm

# Degens is our new deputy mayor

**Belinda Scott**  
Belinda.Scott@coffscoastadvocate.com.au

## Sole candidate to be nominated

COUNCILLOR Rodney Degens was elected unopposed as Coffs Harbour's new deputy mayor at Thursday's city council meeting.

Cr Degens, who was put forward by Cr Nan Cowling and Cr Bob Palmer, was the only candidate nominated for the position, which has been held for the past 12 months by Cr John Arkan.

The current council, led by Mayor and former deputy Cr Denise Knight, is obviously determined to avoid the ridicule heaped on the previous council two years ago this month over the decision to elect five deputy mayors to share the task for a grand total of 10 weeks apiece.

That decision was overturned in a rescission motion at the



**DEPUTY: Cr Rodney Degens.**

following council meeting on October 13, 2011, a meeting which saw Cr Knight retain the deputy mayor's position.

Cr Degens, who is in his second term as a councillor, ran for mayor last September and placed

fourth behind Cr Denise Knight, former mayor Cr Keith Rhoades and Cr John Arkan.

A teacher by profession, Cr Degens is also known for his interest in promoting railways and cycling.

As a councillor, he has supported changes to the B6 business zones.

Cr Degens is a member of the Australia Day and Special Events Committee; the performance review panel for the performance of the general manager; the coastal and estuary management advisory committee; Coffs Harbour Bicycle Users Group; Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium Inc and the Mid North Coast Regional Arts Board.



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# Termites on the move as weather heats up

PEST controllers are warning that termites are on the move with a run of recent wet weather creating the worst possible conditions for infestations.

Brett Gilmore says already this pest season he's responded to several jobs where coprotormes termites and redback spiders have endangered people's safety.

His company Gilmore Pest

Management responded to a job where an elderly woman fell through white-ant ridden floorboards in her lounge-room but was luckily found a short time later by a visitor.

"On that very same day I was called to another job where coprotormes had eaten right through a set of stairs at another elderly resident's house," Brett said.

"Anyone walking down

those stairs could easily have fallen right through and that damage was done in a relatively short period of time.

"Termites colonise between mid November and February, they tend to be more sedate in the winter months and start to move as the weather warms up.

"After the recent heavy rain there's plenty of moisture in people's subfloors,

which is what termites are looking for to form a nesting colony."

Brett said another incident on the same day saw him called in to spray a home for spiders after a child was bitten by a redback spider.

"There's also plenty of spiders around and people need to be mindful of this and get their homes sprayed," he said.



PEST CONTROL: Brett Gilmore says there's evidence to suggest a run of wet weather may have created perfect conditions for white ant colonies in homes.

## Share great light displays with us

HAVE you seen any great Christmas light displays or is your house a standout in its own right?

Send your pictures and address details of

Christmas light displays to editor@coffscoastadvocate.com.au so we can tell everyone else via our digital and print platforms.



## Price hikes cause pain at the pump for LPG gas users

AHEAD of the busiest time of the year on our roads there has been a dramatic spike in LPG gas prices.

In Coffs Harbour they have jumped 20 cents to sit as high as \$1.06 a litre.

While gas still costs less than petrol, that's of little comfort to those who paid conversion costs to LPG to save money and now find themselves paying more than \$1 a litre.

Some gas enthusiasts

say the price is now double what it was two years ago and more than 30 cents higher than a month ago.

The rise has been blamed on world demand, specifically the higher demand as the northern hemisphere dives into winter.

China's rising market for LPG gas and fluctuations in the value of the Aussie dollar are also cited as reasons for the price rise.

## Have your say on council's proposed rate hike

**Belinda Scott**  
Belinda.Scott@coffscoastadvocate.com.au

COFFS Harbour City Council staff will host an information stall from 10am to 2pm at tomorrow's Coffs Coast Growers Market, as part of its consultation with ratepayers about applying for a special rate variation in 2014.

The council is seeking the community's views on a proposal to ask the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to approve a rate increase of around 5% for the next three years, which would raise an additional \$6.2 million in rate revenue.

This would address the shortfall in maintenance and repair of infrastructure that

has developed over the 30 years of rate-pegging.

During that time the council has also had to take over 25 extra services which were previously the responsibility of the State Government, while having its revenue-raising ability restricted by rate-pegging legislation.

A recent online survey, the Budget Allocator, plus a separate commissioned poll

showed support for continuing the current level of council services.

Ratepayers will also shortly receive a letter outlining the financial issues and asking them to put forward their views by January 24 via a survey, which is now open and can be completed online or in hard copy form at libraries or the council's main

administration building.

If approved, the special rate variation would mean by the third year, the average residential ratepayer would be paying approximately \$165.29 per year - or \$3.18 per week - more than if just the rate peg increase was applied over the same period.

The results of the survey will be put to the council at

its meeting on February 13, 2014, and a decision will then be made on whether or not to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation to IPART.

Applications to IPART must be made by February 24.

Further information can be found at coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/financialsustainability.

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News

# Festival fee an option

## Curryfest committee is searching for ways to turn loss to profit

CURRYFEST organisers are looking at ways to preserve the event into the future, and concede a small entrance fee could be one way to avoid the event making a loss.

Committee chairman Ray Willing doesn't think a fee will deter people and could be enough to bolster the coffers into the future.

Last year the event's turnover was close to \$60,000, of which nearly \$6000 was a loss.

Conditions on new funding from Destination

NSW mean that money must be spent in regions outside the Coffs Coast to attract overnight stays to the area.

Mr Willing said in the coming weeks, sponsors for this year's event would be announced but extra help would make it possible to improve the quality of entertainment.

"We're hoping to attract a few more sponsors and pray that it doesn't rain of course," he said.

The entrance fee and other fundraising has to

cover costs of street closures, traffic management and hiring of facilities such as additional toilets, rubbish bins, marquees, stage equipment and generators.

Payment to entertainers, public liability insurance, waste management and tip fees, signage and security costs add to the costs.

Any profits go back into the local community as do benefits to local businesses from visitors to the town.

"It won't be a lot, we're talking \$3 and you can't buy a beer for that," Mr Willing said.

"We need to make a profit out of it, it costs money to run and we can't continue to lose money."

To help with fundraising in 2014, there will be a fantastic raffle. A lucky person will win a return flight to India,

compliments of Air India and another lucky person will win three nights

accommodation for a family at a Darlington Beach Lagoon Spa Villa, compliments of ATPM and NRMA Holiday Parks.

Tickets will go on sale soon. It's one of the ways locals can show their support for our signature festival.

Businesses wishing to provide sponsorship support should contact Ray Willing on 0413 742 180 to take advantage of the additional marketing Destination NSW funding will provide.

# Rate rise would be a big help

COFFS Harbour City Council's dire financial situation is no secret and the council is asking residents to support their request for a rate rise through a survey.

The proposed rate rise of about 5% from 2014/2015 is needed to help maintain community services at their current levels according to council.

A short survey has been available online and at the council's libraries and its main office since early December, but it will close on January 24.

"We're looking to raise additional funds so that we can continue to provide the services the community wants at the present levels. Earlier consultation with residents has made clear that they want to keep the current levels of services," Coffs Harbour City Council general manager Steve McGrath said.

"We look after around \$2 billion worth of public assets for the community - such as 800km of roads, 300 buildings, 55 playgrounds and 200km of stormwater pipes."

Mr McGrath said rate-pegging by the State Government and cost-shifting at federal and state levels had forced councils to divert money to other works.

"As a result, we can't keep the community's assets in a usable condition unless we can generate additional rate revenue and, if the infrastructure isn't usable, we can't continue to provide the services the public wants," he said.

"So council is very keen to hear the community's views on a proposal to ask the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to approve a rate increase above the statewide rate peg increase, which would generate an additional \$6.2 million in rate revenue after the first three years."

By the third year, this would mean the average residential ratepayer would be paying about \$165.29 per year, or \$3.18 per week, more than if just the rate peg increase was applied.



KEEP THE GOOD TIMES COMING: Curryfest organisers are considering a small entrance fee.

PHOTO: LEIGH JENSEN

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