Top Australia Day

Dozens of people turned out for Wagait Beach’s biggest yet Australia Day celebrations on January 26.

Ross (Roscoe) Shearer was named as citizen of the year, Amber Milne is the young citizen and the Cox Country Club’s Anzac Day march was judged the community event of the year.

The awards were presented during the flag raising and formal Australia Day activities at the Cox Peninsula Council offices.

Delivering his address, council president Peter Clee said the nation and the community had achieved much.

“Australia has been at the forefront in research into cancer, ivf, bionics and a host of other fields,” he said.

Peter also highlighted local efforts to help victims of the Asian tsunami.

“I congratulate the members of this community who have organised collections and especially thank those who have contributed.”

Peter thanked the many people involved in making the local Australia Day event such a success.

Activities at the sports ground, ranging from cricket, a water slide and tug-of-way to face painting, music or a convivial ale or two also attracted plenty of takers.

The day wound up at the Cox Club with what party-goers described as “a very relaxed evening”.

Left: The girls won the first of the best of three in the tug-of-war battle of the sexes but lost to the boys after Mark Speechley gave a “helping” hand.

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Engineers to look at boat ramp woes

Two civil engineers have been given the job of investigating the problems with the Mandorah boat ramp.

The $250 000 ramp has been labelled a safety hazard and a source of constant frustration to boat owners with sand blocking much of the ramp most of the time.

A spokesman for Transport Minister Chris Burns said the engineers would be assessing the situation early this month.

The action follows an article about the ramp in a Darwin newspaper and an angry letter to the minister from local fishing enthusiasts Phill Hall and Nadja Tauber.

“We have been able to launch our boat once in the last four months,” they told Dr Burns.

“Locals who have expensive boats are selling them in sheer frustration at their inability to get them into the water.

“Due to the poor design of this boat ramp, sand continually covers the majority of the ramp to a depth of (2 metres) plus.

“Since this ramp has been constructed vehicles are constantly being bogged with at least one late model vehicle being submerged.

“When cleared the ramp is unusable again after the next high tide.

“A local Emergency Services representative has stated that the ramp is a serious safety concern.

“There have been instances of people being pinned under their boats with the ramp’s poor design being a major contributing factor.

“Without attention from your Government it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed on this ramp.”

The letter reminded Dr Burns of the Territorial election due this year.

Left: The Sunday Territorian article highlighting the problems with the Mandorah boat ramp.

Monsoon back in mid-February: bureau

Despite a wet start to the month, Wagait Beach wound up with less than two thirds of the average rainfall for January.

Only a last minute fall of 12 mm on January 31 boosted the total to 275 mm, well down on the average of 426 mm.

There were 17 rain days for the month.

But the good news is that the weather bureau is predicting another monsoon burst with the bureau saying it expects the monsoon rains to return every 40 to 50 days.

“If so, the next active phase could begin to influence northern Australia about the second week of February,” the bureau says.

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Awards for Roscoe, Amber and club

There was widespread popular support for this year’s Wagait Beach Australia Day awards.

Ross (Roscoe) Shearer was named citizen of the year for his efforts cleaning up the beach and his willingness to help others in the community.

Amber Milne is the young citizen after winning the Heywire competition on ABC Radio.

Amber also helps to produce the Darwin City Council’s youth newspaper and was a Territory delegate at the 2004 national youth forum.

The Cox Country Club’s decision to stage an Anzac Day march in addition to the annual ceremony at the council won it the community event of the year award.

The march was a huge success and is planned to be a regular part of the Anzac Day activities in future.

Club president Barry Demasson said the tri-service cadets hoped to organise a band for this year’s march.

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Water, sand and the need for more parking space

Wagait Beach’s long-running water project has been completed after technicians made the final adjustments to the card controller late last month.

All water from the tanks is being charged at $1 per kilolitre.

The 200 per cent increase in water charges has been the source of considerable debate among Cox Peninsula councillors, with unanimous support for a lower charge.

But efforts to renegotiate the price have been abandoned after Power and Water insisted there was no justification to exclude the community from the Territory-wide standpipe charge.

Power and Water’s Darryl Day also pointed out that the project to upgrade the supply to Wagait Beach cost more than $2 million.

With three bores in operation, there should be no shortage of water in future, although council CEO Peter Clark said people should remember it is not an inexhaustible supply.

“Water users need to continue with water conservation practices,” he said.

“But it’s certainly an improvement on the old arrangement.”

The council has won a tender to maintain the new water supply system.

“But we’re not responsible for the commercial and other aspects of the system – it’s a Power and Water installation,” Peter added.

“People worries about faults and billing should use the contact numbers for Power and Water.

“We’ve been involved in helping the contractor and the government get the system set up and we’ve been paid for that.

“We’re also happy to process application forms here but at the end of the day it’s a Power and Water responsibility.”

The Cox Council has received “significant” funding from the NT Government for future work to clear sand from the Mandorah boat ramp.

“It’s for sand removal until the ramp is upgraded,” Peter explained.

The Cox Council report

Congestion at the jetty car park – council looking at ways to increase the parking spaces.

Council CEO Peter Clark

“We’ll be doing weekly dredging.

“The trouble is Mick goes down there one day and cleans it and the next day it’s back.”

He said engineers were expected to visit to assess the problem some time this month.

The ramp problems have prompted fishing enthusiasts Nadja Tauber and Phill Hall to write to the Transport Minister Chris Burns about the problem.

The Cox Council is looking at the need for more car parking space at the Mandorah jetty.

Peter Clark said a range of options were being considered including extending the hardstand and centre-road parking.

“It would be nice if the hardstand could be extended to give more space,” he said.

The council is going hi-tech with a wide range of information now available via the internet.

Peter Clark said council president Peter Clee had done a considerable amount of work on the web site.

“The draft business plan and our finances are now on the net,” he said.

Minutes of council meetings are also available at www.coxpeninsula.nt.gov.au.

Council sports and recreation officer Alby Murray will continue in the position voluntarily when federal government funding runs out this month.

Peter Clark said Alby had been doing a great job and he was hopeful the position could be reinstated.

• ODD SPOT

The Australia Day ceremony included an airing of the new affirmation to Australia – John Howard’s tickle-up of the American oath of allegiance to make Australians more patriotic.

The response was overwhelming but there’s an interesting last line that goes on about respecting and upholding the country’s laws.

In the silence that followed, there was a distinct murmur of “sometimes” from the crowd.

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Confusion over road load limits

It’s open, it’s closed and now it’s open again – little wonder people are confused about whether or not they can take heavy vehicles on the gravel section of Cox Peninsula Road.

The road was near impassable after heavy rain before New Year’s day but remained officially open until it was closed to traffic above 8 tonnes on January 6.

The ban was lifted on January 10 but reimposed a day later. The restriction was lifted again on January 18.

An Infrastructure Department spokeswoman said drivers of heavy vehicles wanting to use the road should check the website at www.roadreport.nt.gov.au or call 1800 246 199.

She said exemptions could be granted to move urgent supplies.

“These would only be granted in exceptional circumstances – for example, to allow fuel and perishables to be transported and to allow emergency vehicles to access the area.”

Promises to complete the road this year are looking brighter with the appearance of survey markers on both sides of the gravel section.

Tenders to carry out the work were advertised in mid-January. The election is due before September this year.

Don’t forget your water card

Water cards are now required to access water

Cox Peninsula residents will be charged for water from 21 January 2005.

For residents who have not yet applied for a card, application forms are available from the Cox Peninsula Council offices, the Power and Water office in Cavenagh Street, or by phoning freecall 1800 245 092.

The card is free of charge and a monthly invoice is issued for water used. A quarterly invoice can be requested if, for example, the water use is very low. Water can be paid for in a number of ways: in advance; direct debit, in person through Australia Post or one of our Customer Service Centres, by post (cheque or money order) or through our website: www.powerwater.com.au

The price is consistent with Territory-wide standpipe installations and has been set at $1/kl.

For more information about the cards, the new Filling Station or your payment options, phone us on freecall 1800 245 092.
The annual cricket test match proved a nail-biting contest. Left: The combined cadets during the flag raising. Below: The Latham family folk duo again proved popular.
Above: Even the cooks enjoyed the Emergency Services sanga sangers.

Left: Bay 13 Wagait Beach-style. The hungry hoards line up for a feed. Below: Some of the very big kids obviously enjoyed the water slide.

Right: The jumping castle kept the small fry occupied. Below: Rhonnie kept a close watch while judging the tug-of-war. Left: Denise Arratta has that grand-motherly touch while daughter Sheree (left above) was a hit with the face painting.
Not much chance for multi-ride ferry pass

There seems little likelihood of a multi-ride pass on the Mandoorah ferry.

A suggestion had been put forward for a 10-trip (one-way) pass for $55, similar to the weekly ticket.

Unlike the weekly ticket, the pass was to be valid for three months, allowing occasional travellers to town a similar discount to the commuter passes.

But SeaCat Ferries co-owner Viv Withnall said the number and range of tickets already available created administrative problems and it was impractical to add another.

She said the deckhands’ jobs were difficult enough.

“It’s not going to happen,” Viv said.

“There’s just too many different types of fares.”

Multi-ride passes are used on Darwin’s buses and on transport systems interstate, but do need to be checked and punched each time the holder makes a trip.

Ferry committee chair Tony Sinclair said the issue was on the agenda for the next ferry committee meeting.

“It’s not something we can do much about, it’s really a matter for the operator,” he said.

Ferry committee member Peter Clee said the committee had been discussing the issue of a multi-ride ticket for some time, but had placed more emphasis in the past few months on timetable changes than ticketing issues.

“Now that the timetables have been resolved and set in place the committee can re-visit issues such as this,” he said.

Peter said he expected it would be difficult to get the multi-ride pass introduced.

Early morning snack attack

While it’s no surprise to find all manner of wildlife in the backyard (and elsewhere) in Wagait Beach, these brumbies seemed very much at home on this Cox Drive property.

They munched happily on the recently cut grass before casually moving on to continue their search for further snacks.

Pic: Bubbles Segall
Blue light disco proves a big hit

Despite the holidays and the absence of many young people, the blue light disco at the Wagait Beach sports ground proved a big attraction.

So much so that the police have indicated they’ll be back later in the year.

Those who turned up had a ball with the limbo proving ever popular and Molly adding a new dimension to getting under the low bar.

Photos thanks to Sheree Arratta

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Make the most of the growing season
Aquarius: January 21 – February 19
This is not a good time to putting in crops like that! Not only will you get a visit from the cops, the neighbours watch for strange shaped leaves on your plants. Lucky No 13

Pisces: February 20 – March 19
You are about to get a message asking what you’d like for your birthday. Order a pair of runners while you can still see the laces to tie them up. Lucky No 5

Aries: March 20 – April 20
This is not going to the best month you’ve ever had. It might be easier to tell the boss you’re going interstate for a checkup. If not, just stay in bed. Lucky number 13

Taurus: April 21 – May 21
A bull in the china shop looks like a fairy tiptoeing through the tulips after your last performance. Get a life or move to Palmerston where you’ll fit in. Lucky No 3

Gemini: May 22 – June 21
Ah, the magic of being twins and being in two places at once. If your other half finds out where you really were you’ll need more than magic to get out of the pit. Lucky No 56

Cancer: June 22 – July 22
Join the Salvos and shake the tin, you dopey crab, not shake the Salvos and pinch the bloody tin. Read your stars properly next time or you’ll be doing time. Lucky No 99

Leo: July 23 – August 23
There is a disturbing influence about to come into your life. Take care, it could manifest itself in the clouds, in the breeze—or at the bottom of a Bundy bottle. Lucky No 100

Virgo: August 24 – September 23
You are about to win a trip overseas. It could be the West Indies but it’s more likely to be Bare Sand Island. Pack the seasick pills and a Vegemite sandwich. Lucky No 9

Libra: September 24 – October 23
There is a chance to go sightseeing where no see-er has gone before. Ring the Hash House Harriers now to find out where the run starts. Lucky No 78

Scorpio: October 24 – November 22
Bloody hell, what got up your nose? Take a couple of Bex and a good lie down. If that doesn’t fix things, an overdose of valium might sort things out. Lucky No 0

Sagittarius: November 23 – December 22
It’s time to study the moon and see if your future will be revealed. Talk to that funny little crater half way up the left side. If it answers, you’re on the right track. Lucky No 44

Capricorn: December 23 – January 20
Beware of the person in the back row of the 10 pm ferry. It could be an old lover or it may be your mother-in-law. Lucky No 4

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Ferry-goers waiting to go to the big smoke thought they may have to walk when the boat made a sudden stop about two thirds of the way across.

But after a short delay, the journey resumed as if nothing had happened.

The crew explained the stop had been to remove a substantial marine hazard – a very large umbrella floating out on the tide.

Council jack-of-all-trades Mark Speechley reckons the mythical Murphy is alive and well and living on the Cox Peninsula.

Speech and offsider Doug Ormsby were all set to get the place ship-shape for the Oz Day celebrations when the mower packed up.

A new part had to come from south and didn’t arrive until Tuesday.

Somehow, between then and Wednesday morning, the pair managed to mow the council grounds and get the sports ground into top shape in time for the festivities.

Potential polliewaffer Keith Phasey took a close interest in the notta boat ramp while he was here for Australia Day.

To demonstrate the problem, he decided to dig a hole in the sand to see whether he could find the ramp underneath.

Luckily for him, the ramp had been cleared five days earlier and he only had to go down half a metre.

The gravel section of the Cox Peninsula Road took a hiding over Christmas but there was no sign of the corrugation flatteners.

A phone call to the relevant government department’s media unit inquired whether there was still a contract and, if so, when would the road be graded?

That was Thursday. Grading was done on Friday – an interesting coincidence.

Citizen of the year Roscoe looked a bit reluctant about coming forward to accept his Australia Day award.

When he did, the inevitable stubby was welded tightly to one hand.

Despite having to hold his award and shake hands, the stubby never moved, prompting one onlooker to remark that she would be delighted to get superglue to stick like that.

Incidentally, Roscoe is still a Kiwi.

Darwin Harbour tide times for February