**Monday 25 November 2019**

**New Year’s Eve fireworks**

Surf Coast Shire Council will cease publicly funded fireworks in Torquay this New Year’s Eve.

Torquay will still get to experience New Year’s Eve fireworks through a display funded and operated by a local holiday resort and Council’s Lorne fireworks will continue as in previous years.

The change in Torquay is in line with a long standing approach to New Year’s Eve celebrations based on harm minimisation.

“Historically Torquay and Lorne townships experienced a large number of anti-social and medical incidents on New Year’s Eve. Since then Council has worked closely with police, and other agencies, to reduce these incidents,” said General Manager Environment and Development Ransce Salan.

“The result is that in the last four years there has been an average of less than one incident per year in each town.

“This achievement comes at a financial cost though and we are now at a point where just 15% of the total budget required to stage fireworks is spent on the actual fireworks display with the remainder having to pay for security, fencing, lighting and ambulance resources,” he said.

“Torquay’s crowd numbers have risen sharply, in part through the influence of social media, and many people are now congregating in areas that are unlit and unsecured. The cost to provide additional safety infrastructure in these areas would be prohibitive so Council will no longer stage fireworks in Torquay.

“We’ve made this decision knowing there is a still New Year’s Eve fireworks display at a less congested location in Torquay available through a commercial provider,” he said.

Council’s Lorne fireworks will continue as the staging is such that crowd logistics are currently less problematic than Torquay.

“Before making this decision we sought feedback from emergency agencies including Victoria Police,” said Mr Salan.

“We appreciate some people may be disappointed but public safety must always be the first priority.”

Surf Coast Shire Council will redirect funds normally spent on fireworks to install tree lighting in Gilbert Street Torquay.

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