



Media Release

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Beach Emergency Numbers (BEN) signage to be installed along Cockburn coastline

Signs carrying unique Beach Emergency Numbers (BEN) will soon be installed at 32 public access locations along the coastline in the City of Cockburn from North Coogee to the Naval Base shacks at Henderson.

The signs, manufactured by the City using a \$31,489 grant from the State Government, are designed to provide uniformity during the reporting of emergencies or beach closures along the West Australian coastline.

More than 600 BEN signs have already been installed along the WA coast as far north as Leeman and south to the Shire of Esperance and its 400km of shoreline.

Each sign carries a unique code to make identification of coastal locations easier in an effort to speed up emergency service access.

Cockburn's code is CKB plus a number combination for each specific location which emergency services store on their database along with GPS coordinates and access methods to ensure rapid response times.

The dual purpose signs will also be used when beaches are closed to protect the public from a potential threat, such as in the event of a shark sighting or attack.

City of Cockburn Recreation and Community Safety Manager Travis Moore said the signage featuring unique BEN signs could save time and in turn lives, as they help emergency services arrive at an incident's specific location as quickly as possible.

"The unique BEN sign numbers are to be quoted by members of the public to emergency services in the event of a shark sighting or attack, or other beach emergency such as a snake bite or surfing/fishing accident," Mr Moore said.

"Emergency services access the sign database to pinpoint the exact location of where they need to attend to render first aid and assistance.



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“Our rangers and other council staff, plus members of stakeholder groups including Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club, will be responsible for activating the reversible signs in the event of a beach closure.”

Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club Director of Life Saving Patrick Rivers said the BEN signs were a simple but effective tool to ensure emergency services came to the right place when they were urgently needed, saving precious time.

“The BENs are equally useful for the general public, especially the large number of visitors from outside the area, local residents who regularly use the beach and surf lifesavers who patrol from Port Coogee to Woodman Point,” Mr Rivers said.

The cost of maintenance and future replacement of the signs will be met by the City, which is also manufacturing 40 signs for installation on Rottnest Island in co-operation with the Rottnest Island Authority.

The program was initiated by the City of Mandurah and Rick Gerring, whose brother Ben Gerring lost his life in a shark attack at Falcon Beach in May 2016.

The signs provide the Water Police number – 08 9442 8600 – for reporting a shark sighting and the SharkSmart website address.

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