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For immediate release

Life rings installed at Gantheaume Point after community petition

The Shire of Broome, in collaboration with the Yawuru Park Council, has heeded community safety concerns after a tragedy last year, with the installation of life rings at Gantheaume Point undertaken following a public petition.

In a tragic turn of events, much-loved Broome resident Rebecca Neufeld lost her life in March 2020 when she was swept from the rocks at Gantheaume Point.

A public petition was presented to the Broome Council in May 2020 by Jack Castellarin calling for the installation of life rings at the north and west cliff edges of Gantheaume Point.

This was passed unanimously by Councillors, with the life rings installed recently.

Shire of Broome deputy president Desiree Male said public safety was utmost in the organisation's priorities.

"The whole Broome community was shocked and saddened to learn of Ms Neufeld's death," she said.

"While we hope the installed life rings will not have to be used, they have the ability to potentially save someone's life in the future."

"Gantheaume Point is considered a highly culturally sensitive area for Yawuru people and additional signage is to be installed advising '*Gantheaume Point is a highly culturally sensitive area for Yawuru people. You are asked to show your respect for Yawuru culture and not leave the pathway or jump from the rocks*'."

Nyamba Buru Yawuru Senior Project Officer – Land & Sea Dean Mathews welcomed the installation of the life rings.

"As Joint Managers of the Minyirr Buru town reserve, it is our role to ensure the safety of the community and all visitors Yawuru country; it is also our obligation to protect and maintain the values of the Yawuru Conservation Parks, which includes Gantheaume Point," he said.

"This area is of high cultural significance for Yawuru people. Yawuru Law Bosses did not wish to encourage people jumping from the rocks into the ocean but agreed to the installation the life rings as a life saving measure.

"We ask visitors to the area respect the nature and impact of the prevailing on-shore ocean swell along this area of coastline, which is also dangerously fragile. Jumping off the rocks into the water is not an activity supported or condoned by the Yawuru Community, and unfortunately can result in the loss of lives."

Mr Castellarin said the installation of life rings was a step forward.

"I'm delighted that the life rings were installed at Gantheaume Point before the one-year anniversary of Rebecca's accident," he said.

“I’d like to see the Shire and Yawuru continue to promote an education and awareness campaign around safety and increase signage at the site.”

ENDS

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