

Sunshine Coast Sunday

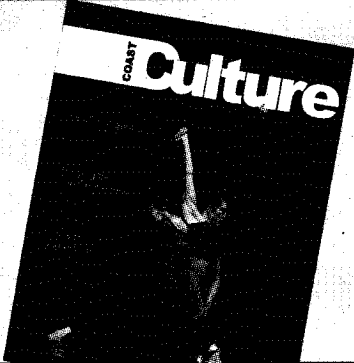
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**OUT AND
ABOUT ON
THE COAST**

– GUIDE TO COAST HAPPENINGS

– SEE WHO'S BEEN SNAPPED ON PAGES 10, 11, 31, 32

'WE CAN'T SAVE SWIMMERS IF WE CAN'T SEE THEM'

Why a tower could
save lives at Happy
Valley – Pages 4 & 5



SAFETY FEARS: Ithaca Caloundra City SLSC captain Lynda Barry and husband Paul Barry want council to move the club facilities to a site overlooking Happy Valley and the Pumicestone Passage. *Photo: BRETT WORTMAN/190891*

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Patrol

By **NIKKI JOYCE**
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THE DEATH of an English tourist has sparked renewed calls for a permanent surveillance tower to be built at one of the Sunshine Coast's most dangerous beaches.

The treacherous waters of notorious Happy Valley, at the mouth of the Pumicestone Passage, claimed the life of a 66-year-old woman who got into difficulty on her bodyboard last Thursday afternoon.

Officials from Ithaca Caloundra City Life Saving Club, who patrol nearby Bulcock Beach, say they can't keep swimmers safe at the beach because they simply can't see them and more lives will be lost unless a solution is found.

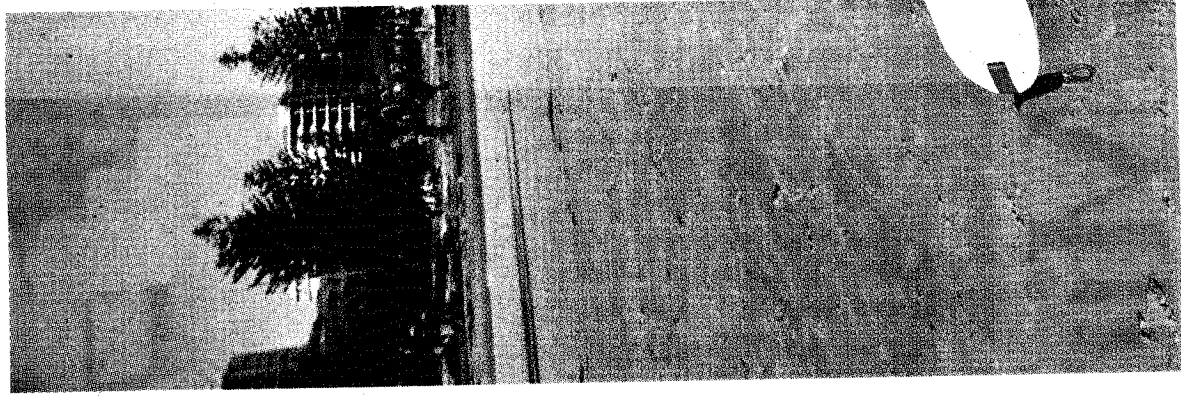
But if the Coast council, which owns their existing facility, built a surveillance tower and storage facility around the corner at Happy Valley, they would be able to keep swimmers safe at both. The plan would not involve erecting flags to make Happy Valley an official swimming area but monitoring the people who foolishly used it.

Building a surveillance tower is believed to be one of several options raised by life guards who attempted to save the tourist's life last week.

Council life guard manager Scott Braby said the option of a tower at or near Happy Valley had been raised in informal discussions since the drowning.

A review of services across all Sunshine Coast beaches was under way as a result of council amalgamations, he said.

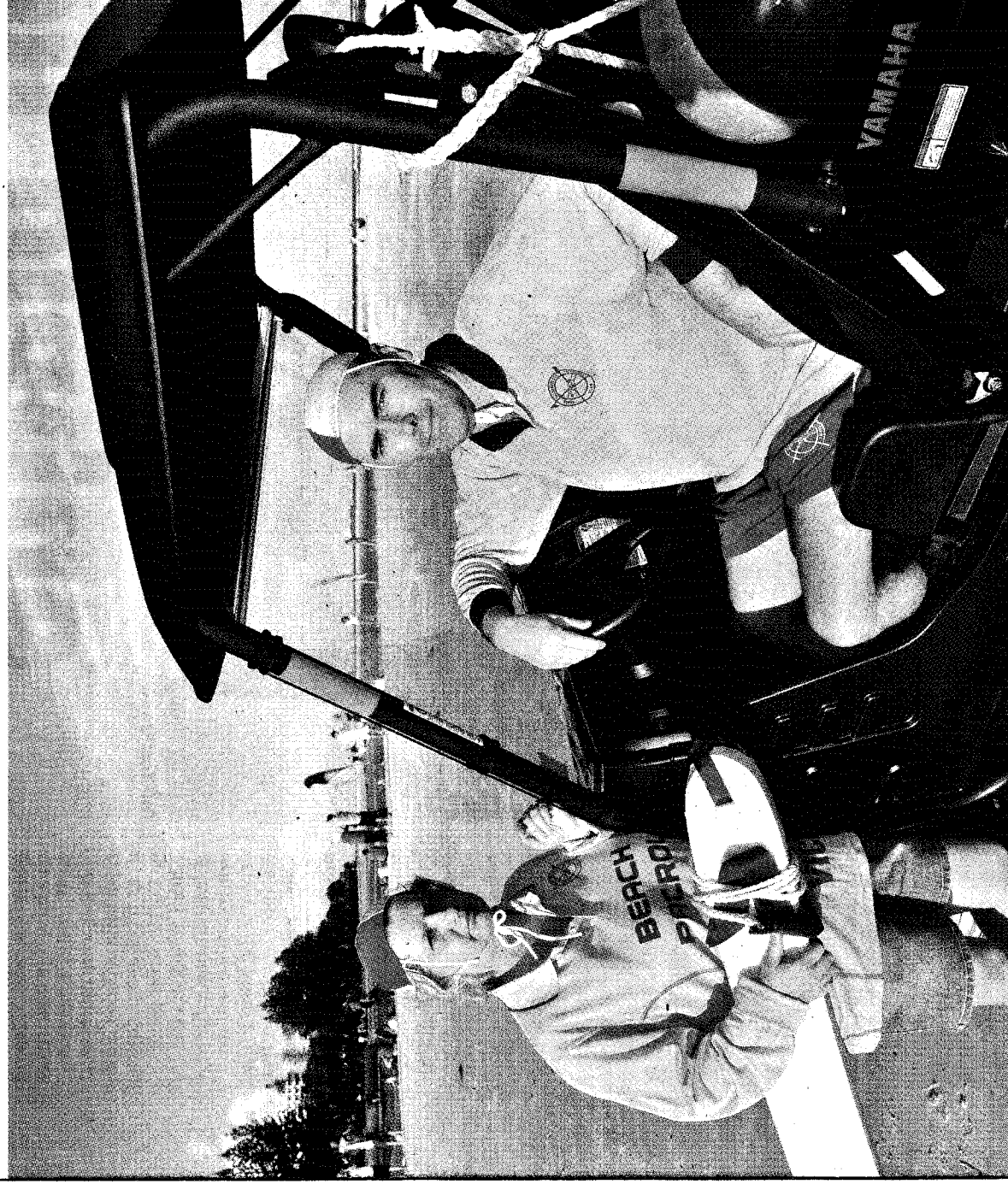
A life guard tower would cost about \$70,000 to establish but the problems at Happy Valley were also



posed at similar river mouths at Noosa and Maroochydore.

Ithaca Caloundra City Life Saving Club president Lynda Barry said last week's drowning was absolutely tragic and again highlighted the reality that lifesavers and council life guards at Bulcock and Kings beaches had no constant visibility of the dangerous area.

calls for tower



CONCERNED: Ithaca Caloundra City SISC captain Lynda Barry and her husband Paul Barry want council to move the club facilities to a site overlooking Happy Valley and the mouth of the Pumicestone Passage.

PHOTO: BRETT WORTMAN / 190891

"It is relatively dangerous because of the tidal sweep and the currents," Mrs Barry said.

"On the surface though, people see the convenience of the nearby carpark that is no longer there at Bulcock, the beautiful sand and clean beach, and the lagoon that is sometimes there for the kids.

"It's divine to look at, especially for tourists who don't know the area."

Mrs Barry's husband and fellow club member, Paul Barry, said the woman's

suggested Sunshine Coast council should take on the responsibility.

"Until then, there will be more tragedy," Mrs Barry said.

Caloundra Councillor Tim Dwyer admitted he had no simple answer to make Happy Valley safer.

And it was not because of the money involved.

He said erecting a life guard tower would create problems of its own.

"It's a real dilemma because once you erect a tower

you are saying to people that it's a safe place to swim - and it's not," Cr Dwyer said.

"Whether it costs \$70,000 or however much to erect a tower there, you could be accused of creating a false sense of security for swimmers.

"Then what happens when a life guard is not on duty but people still swim there because the beach is recognised as being safe?"

"It's complex and I haven't got the answer to the dilemma at this stage."

Volunteers end summer patrols

THE surf lifesaving season will draw to a close tomorrow, with patrols by volunteer lifesavers coming to an end for almost five months.

Lifesavers who have been busy keeping the Coast's beaches safe on the weekends and public holidays since last September will take a well-earned break until the 2010-2011 season begins on September 18.

Council life guards will maintain their vigil on Noosa, Sunshine, Peregian, Coolumb, Mooloolaba, Hyatt, Mudjimba, Twin Waters, Maroochydore, Alexandra Headland, Dicky and Kings beaches every day from 7.30am-4.30pm while volunteer lifesavers will also continue their year-round patrols at Alexandra Headland.

In the wake of last week's drowning tragedy at Happy Valley, SLSQ Sunshine Coast lifesaving services coordinator

Aaron Purchase urged beachgoers to continue putting safety first if they went in the water over the cooler months.

"Obviously there will

be less people swimming in the water throughout autumn and winter, but it's important people remember to swim only at patrolled beaches," Mr Purchase said.

"With the season finishing, people will notice a drop in the number of flags along the beaches and they may have to walk a little longer to find a patrolled beach."

While final statistics for the season are still being collated, the Sunshine Coast's volunteer lifesavers performed 1044 rescues between March 28, as well as 15,163 preventative actions and 5477 first aid treatments, including marine stings.

Mr Purchase said while most people did the right thing by swimming at patrolled beaches, many continued to ignore the warnings.

"Lifesavers had to rescue more people from the surf this season who chose to swim outside the flags, which is disappointing considering the amount of publicity and warnings out there," he said.

"We can't stress enough the importance of swimming between the flags, because if we can't see you, we can't save you."

The Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter will also continue to fly throughout the off-peak months and will still be on 24-hour call for emergencies.



DOWN TOOLS: Volunteer lifesavers will cease patrols as the season closes.

PHOTO: JASON DOUGHERTY

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