

## Call to Close Gay Beat in Dunes at Swannie

<http://www.postnewspapers.com.au/20061209/news/003.shtml>

Men looking for sex are behaving like prairie dogs in the dunes at Swanbourne Beach, according to Nedlands councillor John Bell. He says he wants Nedlands council to stop spending money on condoms distributed by the WA Aids Council.

"The activity down there is growing progressively," he said. "I am not sure the money we are spending is wise."

Nedlands council has earmarked \$4500 for a project with the WA Aids Council to discourage men from using the area for gay sex sessions. Cottesloe police sergeant Scott Halvorson said officers were patrolling the area up to five times a shift after it had been advertised on the internet as a recognised gay beat.

"We are stopping and talking to drivers and if a person is seen committing an offence, it is dealt with," he said.

Police were compiling reports of details about people spoken to in the area.

A Cottesloe mother of two, who asked not to be named, said she was disturbed by the sight of men walking back and forwards looking for contacts.

"Maybe other people are oblivious to what is going on," she said. "Men are walking up and down looking for each other, then they pop into the sand dunes. "I have a nine-year-old son and there is no way I would ever allow him to go down there without me." The woman said she walked her dog in the area because it was more convenient than Cottesloe dog beach.

Mr Bell told the council: "Evidence I am getting is that anti-social behaviour is expanding from the beach to the public toilets at Allen Park." "Cottesloe police describe the men as prairie dogs who keep jumping up and down in the dunes." "We are shelling out money for an anti-social problem and that problem is getting worse."

Mayor Laurie Taylor said: "There has always been a problem with anti-social behaviour in that area." "We have had a couple of reports in the last year." "I certainly have not had anyone jumping up and down about it.

"There was one complaint from a new resident who moved into the area and did not know what went on," Mr Taylor said.

The mayor said the council had spent \$2.2 million on new facilities to improve the area.

Councillor Ian Argyle said: "Anti-social behaviour goes on everywhere."

Community development manager Marion Granich said: "As part of the project, beat users are informed that sex in public places is illegal." "Beat users are also provided with information on alternative, legal locations where they can contact other beat users."

She said data was being collected to help the council know if use of the area increased or decreased in the future," she said. "While there are no guarantees about the total effectiveness of this strategy, ignoring the problem and hoping it goes away of its own accord has already proved ineffective," Ms Granich said.