

SWIMMERS WARNED



Danger: Regular swimmer Helen makes her way through thick seaweed at Cottesloe beach yesterday morning. Pictures: Steve Ferrier

# Cottesloe beach closed as seaweed chokes surf

Michelle Wheeler

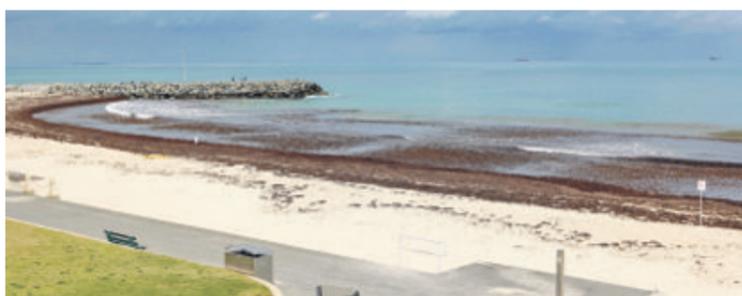
Perth's most popular beach could remain closed for days after surf lifesavers said seaweed and seagrass choking the water was so thick swimmers could get held down in it.

Early morning swimmers at Cottesloe were greeted by beach closed signs yesterday after north-easterly winds trapped tonnes of weed against the groyne.

Surf Life Saving WA lifesaving operations supervisor Craig Bowley said the beach was closed because of the danger the thick weed posed to swimmers.

"It's so thick and it's so heavy that weaker swimmers would get held down in it," he said. "They wouldn't be able to get to the back and the clear water."

Mr Bowley said cobblers could



Trapped: Tonnes of seaweed trapped against the Cottesloe groyne.

hide in the weed and deliver a painful sting if stood on.

It was impossible to tell when the beach would be reopened.

Murdoch University marine biologist Mike van Keulen said the amount of weed was unusual but it was a natural phenomenon caused when seaweed was torn off rocky reefs and seagrass was ripped up

during storms. Perth's mild winter meant it was possible there was more offshore seaweed than usual.

One Cottesloe regular, who wished to be known only as Helen, said she had been coming to the beach every day for 30 years and had never seen so much seaweed.

Rob Appleyard said he had swum at the beach every day for the past

six or seven years but it was the first time he had not been able to go into the water because of the weed.

"It's the first time I've ever actually walked and seen signs where you can't swim because of seaweed and I can see why you can't," he said.

Town of Cottesloe chief executive Carl Askew said the council would monitor the weed but would try to allow it to clear naturally rather than clean the beach. "One would expect that as the winds turn around and you get something from the south-west it'll go," he said.

Dr van Keulen said any remaining weed was usually buried naturally during spring and summer.

Marine biologists preferred beaches not to be cleaned because the nutrients released when the weed degraded fed the next generation of marine life.

## Coroner raps batt company

Sydney

A company's casual approach to health and safety contributed to the death of a man working on the Federal Government's home insulation scheme, a coroner has found.

Marcus Wilson, 19, died in November 2009 after installing insulation in a western Sydney house for Pride Building.

He collapsed after working in temperatures of more than 42C.

He died later from complications from hyperthermia, including organ failure and muscle meltdown, NSW Deputy State Coroner Hugh Dillon said yesterday.

## Pet dogs save lost toddler

Sydney

A family's three pet dogs helped keep safe a four-year-old Down syndrome boy who went missing overnight on NSW's mid-north coast.

Cold and covered in scratches, Riley Martin was found in bush near Shelley beach just after 7am yesterday when rescuers heard his dogs barking.

He and the dogs hadn't been seen since midday on Wednesday when he disappeared from his home in Nambucca Heads.

"Those dogs kept him alive," his mother, Bianca, said.

## Cop on theft charges quits

Kate Campbell

A senior constable who faced court yesterday accused of stealing almost \$60,000 from Mirrabooka police station has quit the force.

Robert John Talbot Lawrence, 40, was initially stood down from duty after internal affairs investigators charged him, but it is understood he has resigned and his resignation has been accepted.

He is charged with four counts of stealing as a public servant and appeared in Perth Magistrate's Court, where his bail was renewed and the case adjourned until November 29.

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