

Whales take form

By TIANA RAY

WITH Saturday's Upwelling Festival fast approaching, one of the highlights of the festival, the Five Whales Project is in full swing preparation wise.

Six artists, including four local artists, have been working in five different mediums to create the five near life-size whales that will be the showpiece of the festival.

The five different whales will represent the blue whales, which feed off the coast of Portland between November and May each year because of the Bonney Upwelling — a natural marine phenomenon that powers a feeding frenzy of tuna, crayfish, giant crabs, squid, fish, seabirds, krill and blue whales.

This food web is also the cornerstone of the lucrative local fishing and tourism industry.

The whales will be installed about 100 metres from each other on the Henty Beach foreshore area and, at different times during the festival, some will spout water.

"With the help of Jo Grant, our regional arts development officer, we have engaged creative director Ian Pidd to lead the artists in designing and building these five massive structures," Portland Tourist Association Upwelling Festival chairperson Laurelle Jasper said.

"It is so exciting; they will be beautiful and huge. Portlanders will have never seen anything like it," she said.

Portland artists Phil Cousins and Heather Richardson have been working on the sandcastle whale, which people may have



VOLUNTEERS work on the whale puppet, being created in foam rubber, which is one of five near life-size whales being constructed that will be on display at the Henty Beach foreshore area during the Upwelling Festival.

Picture: EBONY YUILL, EBONISTIK PHOTOGRAPHIX

noticed is already taking shape on Henty Beach near TS Henty, the base for Portland's Australian Navy Cadets.

Mr Cousins said he had not previously worked on anything on this kind of scale, and said he usually worked in paper and

wood to create sculptures.

"The opportunity to work on something on a very large scale, and to work with the other artists is why I decided to become involved in the project," Mr Cousins said.

The pair, along with a number

• While Mrs Pevitt's sculpture will not be a complete whale, the head and tail of the whale will be sticking out of the 'water', giving the effect the whale is swimming in the water.

Gordon Stokes, another local artist, has been working on a 25-metre-long, four-metre-wide whale made using fishing paraphernalia on a framework of 90 millimetre PVC pipe.

Mr Stokes said the whale was the biggest project he had worked on. "This is enormous, the project is just enormous," he said.

He said the project would help people to appreciate the actual size of the whales.

"I think the size of the whales will surprise

of volunteers, have worked for more than 70 hours building the whale, with the finishing details being worked on in the coming days. Mr Cousins said the whale would be completed on Friday night.

Inverleigh inflationist Mark Cuthbertson has been working

with volunteers Jason Scott and Brian Kermond on a 24-metre-long inflatable whale.

Mr Cuthbertson said the whale would be a single cell structure that will be held up by air, and he would have to park a car inside

the whale to hold it down.

The weather is the inflatable whale's worst enemy and Mr Cuthbertson hoped the wind would stay away for the festival.

"I mainly work in theatre and on festivals and this is the first whale I have made," Mr Cuthbertson said.

Mr Cuthbertson also warned people that the whale wasn't a jumping castle, and he asked people to not touch it when it was installed at the foreshore.

Melbourne artist Daniele Poidomani, along with a group of volunteers, has been steadily working on his giant foam puppet whale since last Monday.

Mr Poidomani makes giant puppets for shows and theatre and this is the first whale he has made.

"I haven't made a whale before but I have made a giant goldfish," he said.

The puppet will be about 16 metres long and will require between four and six people to carry it in the street parade.

Mr Poidomani said the whale would be fully animated.

Heywood artist Nikki Pevitt, along with her husband Brett, has been busy preparing an aluminium whale that will give the illusion it is swimming on Henty Beach.

Mrs Pevitt said she had previously worked on large-scale projects like the whale, but had used tissue paper, string and bamboo, not aluminium.

"I am using Brett's knowledge in metalwork to build the whale," she said.

the community.

"The festival will be a great way to get information to the community about blue whales and the Bonney Upwelling, I think much of this is fairly new information for the community and it will make people more aware," he said.

Once completed, Mr Stokes said he would have spent 12 days on the project, working between eight and 10 hours each day.

The festival will be a one-day, free event for everyone and there will be no fenced/ticketed area.

For more information, see the Upwelling Festival guide published in last Friday's edition of the *Portland Observer*.