



## 5 lands walk

— CON RYAN

On 24 June 2006, Gosford City Council, in conjunction with the Aboriginal and local communities, artists and surf clubs, will be introducing a concept called the "5 Lands Walk" into the Central Coast. The Council hopes that this walk will become an annual event.

The "5 Lands Walk" has been inspired by a similar walk, called the Cinque Terre or 5 lands, that was introduced into Italy some years ago. To quote from some of the promotional material for the Cinque Terre:

*The charming villages of the Cinque Terre, perched spectacularly on the cliffs, attract walkers from around the world. The Cinque Terre comprises 5 villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore. Built into the cliffs between the sea and the hills, this area is famous for its natural beauty and spectacular hiking tracks with centuries old footpaths and mule tracks winding through olive groves, terraced vineyards and orchards high above the sea.*

A number of people drawn from the community completed the proposed "5 Lands Walk" at the beginning of April. Starting at McMasters Beach we worked our way along the beach to Copacabana up the hill to Captain Cook lookout. It was surprising

that a large number of the group, who have lived in the area for some time, had not visited the lookout. As many of you would know, the views from the lookout are most spectacular. We worked our way down a track to Winney Bay, enjoying the views and the bush, along a fire trail up to the water tank positioned above Avoca Beach. We walked down a series of stairs which saw us come to the Avoca Beach Surf Club. The rest of the walk winds its way along the beach to North Avoca up the road and over the hill to Terrigal.

Elio Gatti, Gosford Council's Cultural Development Officer and the driver of this event, goes to great lengths to explain that the walk is not a race but a vehicle for the individual's connection to the land, to themselves, to each other and to all aspects of the community.

June has been selected for this event for many reasons. It's cooler, off season for tourists and importantly it's the migration season for whales. You can

visualise looking out to sea and seeing whales breaching as you walk some or all or just visit the lookouts along the way of the "5 lands walk"

It's interesting that the local Aboriginal community's insignia is the whale. One of the many connections that Elio enthuses about is the opportunity to learn more about the history of the area through the culture of the Aboriginal community. It is envisaged that as the walk is developed, the Aboriginal community, together with local artists, will be invited to tell the history of the area through their art which will be positioned along the track.

You may already have seen promotional material advertising the walk together with the activities and entertainment that will accompany the event. I look forward with interest and enthusiasm to see the possibilities that this event promises, come to fruition over the coming years.



# president's message

**IAN ESPLIN**

This issue of the Avoca Beach Review is the last for the current association year 05-06 and is marked by a number of significant events in the community.

On the positive side the surf club rebuilding is nearing completion and the club will be celebrating the occasion with entertainment over several nights reviewing the history of the club. The new building is a major asset for Avoca and will provide a high quality venue for both community and private events well into the future.

Coinciding with this opening is a new initiative by the Council called The Five Lands Walk. This is an event which seeks to draw on the creative talents of the communities of the five coastal "villages" from MacMaster's Beach through to Terrigal. It seeks to explore the connections between them which are both physical in the form of a walk (sections of which are still under development) and also cultural and historic especially relating to the indigenous heritage.

This program has come into being through the energetic work and enthusiasm of the new cultural development officer at the Council, Elio Gatti with considerable support from Avoca's Con Ryan who wrote the cover page article about it in this newsletter. The Association has given its full support to the venture which is intended to be just the first trial run of what will hopefully be an on-going and developing annual event.

On the less positive side we are about to lose one of the sentimental icons of the area in the form of the CWA hall which has been sold and is now in private hands. We understand that arrangements have been made to allow some continuation of use by community groups including this Association, children's play groups, dancing lessons, etc. It is however now no longer owned by a community based organisation and so it must inevitably ultimately revert to full private use. The old building is basically living on "borrowed time".

This building along with the adjacent garage are reminders of the old Avoca being original structures and have contributed to the distinctive character of the area. Whilst it is understandable that the CWA has to manage their assets prudently it is unfortunate that this part of our collective memory will disappear.

This loss will be more keenly felt if what replaces these buildings is bland or in some way inappropriate especially due to their prominent location at the entry to the village. There would be a benefit however if a redesign of this area incorporated a solution to the current dangerous situation for pedestrians at the corner

with no footpaths or adequate way of safely crossing the road. The combined efforts of the ABCA and the Chamber of Commerce some time ago in trying to advance the idea of a walkway/cycleway on the Northern side of the road have so far received little support in the Council who have stated that the concept is "a low priority". We hope this will change.

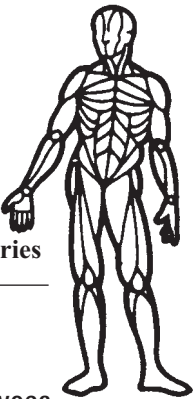
The premature closure of the cinema is another loss to the community. Whilst I don't want to comment on the details of this which are elaborated on in an article later in the newsletter, I hope that the owners and operators can sort out their current difficulties and that also any future development on the site will have broad community support.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 7th August and I encourage people to attend since we will be discussing our future at what is quite a critical time. The Association along with many other community organisations is suffering from a decline in support. There are many theories put forward to try and explain the reasons for this. One is that people have become so "time poor" that there isn't the time or energy available to be involved in anything other than personal pursuits. Another is that our culture has become far more individualistic and that community organisations such as this just don't interest us much any more.

It is also true that organisations of any kind must be receptive to changing circumstances and be prepared to evolve. We put a lot of effort in to this newsletter since we feel that it is something which is generally appreciated by the community. The positive feedback we get from people who say they enjoy reading this newsletter and find it interesting and informative confirms this.

What our role is or could be beyond this is more open to debate and so I am proposing that we have a broad discussion at the AGM about what we want the association to be, what it should do and even if it should exist at all. The association work currently is done mostly by a small group of individuals which is hard to sustain over time and so if we are to continue we need to be relevant to the community generally and also be an organisation that people are interested in contributing to. Come along with ideas and have your say about what you would like to see happen - it could be an interesting discussion.

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# vale don bowtell 1926-2005

*The committee is pleased to publish this information provided by son Ian Bowtell and by Patricia Delves, who joined the Avoca Beach Progress Association 31 years ago and was its Treasurer for many years. Much of this story comes from Michael Hunter's eulogy at Don's funeral on 21 December 2005.*

Donald Earle Bowtell was born in Fairfield and went to school at Maitland. He was the mascot for the 1932 Grand Final when Paddy's Pumpkin Pickers played the Maitland Coalminers. He later played football as a little halfback, tough as nails.

All his life Don loved dancing. He helped supervise the discos at Avoca Beach Public School. At its 50 year celebrations in 1985 he was amongst the 10-12 year olds having a great time! He planted a tree in that ceremony.

Don Bowtell was a livewire in the Avoca Beach community. Among his many activities he was its taxi driver, ambulance officer, owner of a local garage, caravan park owner, tow truck driver and rural fire brigade captain.

Michael Hunter believes Don was the fourth mechanic to occupy the garage built in 1950 by Norman and Mervyn Hunter, following John Heazlett and Frank Kauter. He bought the garage and extended it, which we all now know as Bowtell's.

Don loved animals. We all remember the chooks in the house in the caravan park, his cats, dogs and birds. His caravan was his home and home to all his animals. His accountant once nearly died of fright when a 6 foot carpet snake emerged from Don's bedroom. Don said, "It's OK, it's a pet, it's got to have a home somewhere".

Don kept his horses in his paddock, a place that we all call Heazlett Park. Gosford Council often threatened Don and he had to regularly clean up their droppings before a cricker or football match could be played on the Oval.

Around 1965 Don began earth works on his Avoca Beach Caravan Park. One story is worth relating. When excavating for the construction of the E&H Garage, Michael Hunter deposited all the fill onto the Avoca School site. Don thought this was a good idea and joined in supplying fill for the school for free. All was going well until the Education Department found out. There didn't seem to be any paper work or approvals and all hell broke loose. The result today, as we know, is a fine sports area and a great basketball court known as Bowtell's.

As President of the Chamber of Commerce he organised to plant additional pine trees along Avoca beachfront in the 1970s. They lasted less than a month. Don had the idea of getting the kids involved, so the public school children replanted the next 7 Norfolk Island pines, 5 of which are still standing today.

Don's many achievements include the following:

- Charter Member of Green Point Avoca Lions (President 1988/89);
- Life member of Avoca Beach Fire Brigade, 20 years as Captain;
- A part time Ambulance Driver;
- The tow truck operation
- The NRMA serviceman;
- President of the Avoca Beach Progress Association which he joined in 1963 and was made a life member in 1988. (The Association changed its name to the Avoca Beach Community Association in 2000);
- President of the Avoca Beach Chamber of Commerce;
- Active worker for the Avoca Beach Public School P&C;
- Worked hard to establish the Avoca Beach Scouts; and
- Instigated Santa Claus around the town on the Red Blitz Fire Engine.



One night Don forgot to close any of the doors of the garage. The next morning there was not one item missing in the garage. Village life in Avoca was great.

If you wanted to know anything in the town, ask Don. He always went to every accident, either as an Ambulance driver, tow truck operator or NRMA. If anyone needed help Don was always there. A kinder, more considerate person you wouldn't meet.

Don was a unique and real life character who has earned his place in the folklore of Avoca Beach. Thanks Don!

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# Why the cinema had to close

*This article is based on information provided to the Committee. The Committee believes that the public interest warrants publication of this information, much of which is on the public record. The article was emailed to the theatre owners prior to publication however they declined to comment on the details of the article.*

On the evening of Monday 1 May the Avoca Beach Cinema showed its final film presentation before closing for an indefinite period. The film was "Walk the Line" about the life story of Johnny Cash and there was a good audience. During the evening there was much informal discussion about the significance of the night. Emotions were mixed, ranging from sadness to anger to resignation about the loss of this well loved venue that has been in continuous operation for 55 years.

The announcement of the imminent closure came as a surprise given the general knowledge that the current operator's lease had at least 6 months to run until November. It was also well known however that relations between the owners and the operators had been strained in recent times under the pressure of imminent redevelopment proposals which would inevitably mean the cessation of the business in its current form.

The operators Lynda and Russell Hansen bought the business 87 years ago and have maintained a steady level of operation over what has been one of the most challenging periods for cinemas generally, due to competition from DVDs, home cinemas, the internet and pay TV. Many cinema businesses around the country have ceased due to these economic pressures. However the current closure of this cinema was due to quite different reasons.

Essentially the business had to shut down due to a lack of compliance with the Building Code of Australia in relation to fire safety. This was despite the fact that Council first raised these problems in 2003. The Council inspectors, during their annual 'Place of Public Entertainment' license inspections, had been particularly concerned about fire escapes and the lack of fire-isolated construction to such areas as the projection-box and storage areas. These problems were nominated as "life safety issues".

The committee is informed that Council wrote to the owners in 2004 and 2006 requiring rectification of the problem areas. The Council went on to say in their letters that they had no discretion in the matter and the owners were given a time limit of 21 days to notify council of how they planned to rectify the problems. The operators have also made repeated requests for rectification work to be carried out.

The problem areas were however never rectified to the required standard and matters came to a head recently for the operator when a major piece of equipment burnt out in the projection box. This event highlighted the precarious and dangerous situation that had been allowed to continue long after knowledge of it was clearly established. The operators believed they could no longer continue operation in this situation given the danger to the public and staff as well as the insurance liabilities that would follow in the event of an incident given the unsafe, non-compliant building.

A final meeting between the owners and the operators was scheduled for Tuesday 2nd May as a last ditch attempt by the operators to get the required work done quickly; however, this was not achieved and the cinema will remain closed for the foreseeable future. In the meantime the operators are continuing to pay rent while being denied an income.

The operators have paid commercial rent on the premises over the whole period of their lease to date and regard the basic structural work required to bring the building into compliance with fire safety requirements as being the responsibility of the building owner. The owners have also written to the operators confirming this understanding.

To date the response of the owners to these problems has not been acceptable to the Council inspectors or to the operators. Rather than installing the required fire rated construction the owners have suggested that the problems be avoided by not using certain rooms in the building. The operators believe they have a right to expect the building that they are leasing will be suitable for commercial operation and they require access to all spaces in the building. The legalities of commercial leasing are complex however and such protection of tenants as exists in residential leases is non-existent with commercial ones.

Meanwhile there has been slow progress with the rezoning application to the State government that Council voted to proceed with in December. The first step of this process is the public exhibition of the Planning Agreement that relates to a monetary payment to the Council to upgrade the car parking in South End Park. This was expected in March.

At the time of the Council decision, several members of the community saw



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problems with this agreement since it linked the payment of a sum of money with a relaxation of one of the existing planning policy requirements which is adequate onsite car parking. This appeared to be inconsistent with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act which states that a Planning Agreement is not valid if it is linked to such a relaxation of a planning policy.

The ICAC in their current study on corruption risks in local government nominated inappropriate use of Planning

Agreements as a particular item for investigation, noting that "a developer cannot buy an approval". The proposal relies heavily on this agreement to substantially reduce the requirement for onsite car parking. If it is actually not valid then the redevelopment in its current form is also not possible.

So what does the future hold? We can only wait and see. In the meantime, Avoca has lost a familiar and much loved attraction at least for the time being.

## *bushcare grant update*

**EVE MAHON** PROJECT SUPERVISOR & BULBARARING BUSHCARE MEMBER

The last *Review* announced that the application to the NSW Environmental Trust for funding towards the Restoration of Bulbararing Reserve, Avoca Beach, was successful! With the grant totaling \$39,000 the total applied for, it is a significant amount and the largest received thus far. The grant will fund professional contract bush regenerators.

### What happens next?

Gosford City Council will act as administrators of the grant and have completed the initial paper work required to manage these funds. The Bulbararing Bushcare Group is delighted to again be working with Robyn Urquhart who is the Council's supervising bushcare officer for the project. Robyn is back working tirelessly for the environment after absence caused by illness.

### How is work progressing?

Four local contractors have just been briefed as to the aims of the project and have viewed the site. As all these local professionals are skilled bush regenerators and have excellent track records, the choice will be difficult. The contractor chosen will spread the work over this year and the following 2 years to gain maximum results. A final report to the Government as to the success of the project is required in February 2009.

### Will it work?

This beautiful remnant of bush in our midst has responded beautifully to the efforts of the bushcare group for many years. We are therefore confident that this newly funded project which is aimed at the riparian zone will enhance the linkages to Avoca Lake ensuring the continuity of wildlife habitat, help protect local catchments and prevent the spread of weeds.

### What can I do?

The part of volunteers and a caring community is vital. It will require many years to restore all of the reserve to its pristine condition but it is slowly happening. Working in the bush to the sound of myriads of birds, as well as being rewarding, is quite a delightful experience. I would encourage anyone who would like information or to join us to contact Council's Bushcare Officers: Robyn Urquhart on 4325 8195, Geoff Bakewell on 4325 8169, or myself on 4382 2123.



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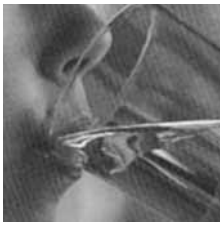
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# dental decay in avoca

**TONY ADAMS**

I have just heard of yet another primary school child from Avoca having to be hospitalised to have seriously decayed teeth removed under general anaesthesia.

This is an ongoing tragedy in the Gosford area, due to the 40-year refusal of the Council to bring fluoride levels in the water up to the proven protective level of 1 part per million (ppm).

When I retired to Avoca from being Chief Medical Officer and Professor of Public Health in Canberra I was asked by the local branch of the Australian Dental Association, the Division of General

Practice and the Area Health Service to chair a group called the Central Coast Community Dental Health Forum to do something about this situation.

A study by the Area Health Service two years ago showed that hospitalisations of young children were 3 times more frequent in un-fluoridated Gosford compared to Wyong which has been fluoridated as long as Sydney, since 1967.

We calculate that the failure of Gosford to follow Wyong's lead has cost the citizens of Gosford \$3,680,000 per year

(or \$139,840,000 over 40 years) in unnecessary dental expenditure. Wyong citizens have been saved the same expenditure though fluoridation.

The Australian experience with fluoridation has been one of the most impressive public health stories of the last century. Sydney went from having the worst teeth in the OECD to the best in a space of ten years or so once fluoride was introduced.

The fluoride story emerged over 80 years ago when scientists in the USA made the observation that dental caries were lowest in communities where the fluoride level in the water was around 1ppm.

In many parts of the world the water already contains fluoride at that level – fluoride being one of the most common elements in the earth's crust – but in some countries like Australia the soils have been so leached over the centuries that the fluoride level is insufficient to give this protection and must be augmented by carefully adding extra. (Gosford water for example only has 0.3ppm so another 0.7ppm needs to be added to provide fluoride at levels that are beneficial to forming teeth in infants and in protecting older teeth – into old age- in adults.)

Gosford – and therefore Avoca – remain one of the few areas in NSW that are denied the benefits of a totally safe and effective public health measure that the rest of the state has enjoyed for decades.

The problem lies with a number of long-serving councillors who have made a career out of opposing fluoridation. In a debate on the subject in June last year the council demonstrated abysmal ignorance of the science and public health research done in Australia and clearly are not competent to make a decision on such a topic. They refused to refer the matter to the Director General of Health as allowed by the legislation and so the status quo persists and the dental health of all of us – particularly our children – continues to worsen. The decision should rest with NSW Health who has all the expertise.

I hope concerned citizens will voice their desire to see Gosford enter the 20th century and stop further cases like that of the Avoca primary school child happening.

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ABCA meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of every second month in the CWA Hall (next to the Garage on Avoca Drive).

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