



major bushcare grant - EVE MAHON

applicant for the grant

It is with much pleasure and anticipation that Bulbararing Bushcare Group announces the approval of a substantial grant (\$38,828) from the NSW Environmental Trust towards the Restoration of Bulbararing Reserve, Avoca Beach.

The application for this grant was under the category "Vegetation Corridors/Vegetation Management". It referred to the primary environmental issue as weed infestation in the riparian zone and throughout the reserve, the spread of which is detrimental to the reserve's biodiversity.

The application requested a total amount of \$38,828.00 over three years. This will pay for professional contractors to be chosen for their expertise in ecological projects. Gosford City Council will be administering the funds from this grant.

Over the past 10 years and with the assistance of smaller grants, the Bulbararing Bushcare Group has achieved remarkable results in the areas worked to date, with abundant return of indigenous vegetation communities and wildlife. Now, with much excitement and encouragement, the group will be able to advance the project to new levels. The need for volunteer work is expected to increase as we take this step toward the ultimate goal of complete restoration of this beautiful and valuable remnant of bush at Avoca Beach.

The Environmental Trust was established by the NSW Government in 1998 to support exceptional environmental projects

that do not receive funds from the usual government sources. There was strong competition for funds this year, the Trust receiving 633 applications; it approved 157 grants across only 7 programs. The success of the Bulbararing Bushcare Group's application is good recognition by the Trust of the environmental value of this reserve and the dedication of the bushcare group and the Avoca Beach community entrusted with its restoration and preservation.

The Bulbararing Bushcare Group is supported by the Avoca Beach Community Association, Gosford City Council Bushcare Officers and field supervision from the National Trust of NSW. I warmly acknowledge Council's Robyn Urquhart for her assistance in preparing this successful application.

If you would like any further information or can assist with this rewarding bushcare project, please contact Council's Bushcare Officers (4325 8222) or group convenor Carol (4381 0175) or me (4382 2123).



Eve Mahon, farthest right, at launch of Envirofund grant, July 2004.
Line up includes other contributors to this issue, Carol Gumley and Bill Robertson



president's message

IAN ESPLIN

This is the first message for the New Year and I hope that we can look forward with optimism to the year ahead. The news so far on the environmental front is a mixture of good and bad.

The front cover story is an example of the good news with the sizeable NSW Govt. grant towards the ongoing regeneration of Bulbararing Reserve. This is a tremendous boost for this program that is gradually re-establishing the native vegetation in this reserve which contains stands of trees from pre-European settlement times.

Many people may not be aware that Avoca was heavily logged in the past and all the trees in the Avoca bowl area for instance are regrowth following this period. The regeneration process will take many years to complete and will need the support of volunteers both in the regeneration and also in helping maintain it into the future.

Part of the bad news was that the lake suffered a major fish kill in January due to low oxygen levels in the water which Bill Robertson talks about in his article. There are a variety of causes for this condition however the problem has been made much worse by the continuing low water levels. Despite the fact that there has been some rain this has not been enough to compensate for the infiltration and evaporation and consequently the level has not increased since the last let-out.

The fundamental problem is excessive nutrients from urban development in the lake catchment. At the February meeting the Association had a presentation by Rowan Hayes who in association with the MacMasters Beach Progress Association has carried out an extensive study of this problem in Cochrane Lagoon. What was interesting was that as well as highlighting the problems caused by bad planning in the past they were able to identify certain key problem areas which if dealt with would have a significant effect on slowing the deterioration in the lake's health caused by this factor.

Reversing the damage of the past is more difficult since as Bill points out once the nutrients are present in the lake they stay there in a constant cycle causing the algae build up that has been especially noticeable this year. The Council's advertised program to harvest the algae in an attempt to reverse this build-up has stalled due to technical problems.

At the beachfront there have also been a number of serious and fatal accidents highlighting the danger that accompanies this beautiful part of Avoca. George Spencer has provided more information and some important safety messages in his article.

On a more general level Avoca continues to be a focus of contentious argument regarding alternative views of the future. In

December the Council voted to proceed with the rezoning application for the Theatre site which would allow a big increase in the density of development. This still requires approval by the Department of Planning before it would become part of the official planning policy.

There is a movement around coastal communities generally to try to control the negative side-effects of the "Seachange" movement with some councils instituting population caps as a means of control. This raises difficult issues of equity and freedom of movement which we tend to regard as part of the Australian way of life.

It is inevitable however that we will progressively have to get used to increased intrusions of a similar kind if real progress is to be made on the pressing environmental challenges of today and in the future.

The role of local Councils in protecting the environment is complex due to the competing interests of facilitating development and providing services. How particular councils balance and hopefully harmonise these interests is coming under increasing scrutiny.

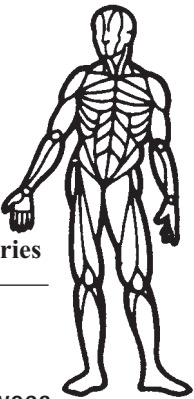
Typically councils are often described as being "pro-development" or "pro-environment" with individual councillors electioneering on a platform supporting one camp or the other. Their intention is that when in office they will be able to influence decisions according to their "mandate".

This view however misses a fundamental difference between the role of local government politicians and other elected government officials. Local politicians both make the rules but also are responsible for applying them. This creates possible conflict of interest situations which are currently the subject of a study by the ICAC (Independent Commission against Corruption).

Essentially the role of a councillor is to apply current policies in an objective and even-handed way irrespective of his "mandate" or special interest group. If he disagrees with this policy then he has the option of trying to change it or create a new policy. It is obvious by the number of investigations that go on that this concept is generally not clearly understood.

In regard to many of the environmental challenges facing Avoca there already exist many sound and well researched policies on the Council's books. The problem relates more to the effective implementation of them.

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safety in the water

GEORGE SPENCER

Over the last couple of weeks, there has been a series of quite serious (and highly preventable) accidents at Avoca Beach resulting in long term trauma and on two occasions, death.

It is extremely rare that a fatality will take place when a swimmer stays between the flags but it isn't always swimmers who get into trouble.

Public Education undertaken by Surf Lifesaving Australia provides a vital link between Life Savers (Professional and Voluntary) and the Public but will never replace common sense.

In recent incidents, two Asian fishermen, poorly prepared for the conditions, wearing rubber soled shoes and leather shoes, long trousers and no flotation gear were cleaning their catch when a "freak" wave washed one of them into the water. The observer saw his mate throw their plastic basket in, to act as flotation, but the lid opened and sank following which, his mate dived in and being unable to swim, got into immediate difficulty. Because the location was some 2-300 metres from the rock pool the observer took some minutes to alert Council Lifeguards whose actions while bordering on heroic, were unable to save either man's life.

The previous week saw a young lad playing in an area known as the "waterslide" break his leg at the knee causing a sickening injury while in the same week in an area nearby and known as "Mug's Rock" a young boy dived into a wave surge which drove him headfirst under jagged rocks causing spinal injuries and horrendous lacerations to his scalp.

So Avoca Beach's dangerous profile grows in its 75th year of operation.

The average surf swimmer at Avoca should be aware of a few things:

Firstly the rip (or the route by which wave power returns out to sea) is sudden and savage adjacent to the rock pool. This rip is known as a permanent rip and is regularly photographed and published year in and year out by surf magazines.

Other rips can occur at our beach, regularly at the Shark Tower, and all are identifiable by the presence of;

- Dark coloured water heading out to sea
- Murky water caused by sand off the bottom
- Debris floating out to sea
- A rippling effect when the surrounding water is calm.

If you find yourself in any rip, stay calm and swim with the rip at a 45 degree angle if you can, until the power of the rip lessens; you should then be able to swim, wave assisted, back to the beach. Don't swim against a rip as this will cause you to panic and lose your strength. If you can, hold your arm vertical and signal for help which may be as close as the nearest surfer or the Lifesaver.

Secondly swim between the flags but before you do look at the surrounding buildings or landmarks so you can maintain your fixed position and then check it regularly.

Thirdly, Council Lifeguards and Volunteer lifesavers are friendly folk. Ask them about conditions, tides and weather and they will be only too pleased to advise you.



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avoca lakewatch

BILL ROBERTSON

Filamentous Algae. You have probably heard of it, but what is it and why should we be worried about it?

It grows in long strands which can be a metre or more in length, and looks like green fishing line. It is non toxic. It thrives on high nutrient levels in the sediments which have accumulated in the lake over many years. It does not have a root system to supply it's nutrients, instead it relies on a "holdfast" to attach itself to the bottom.

The ends of the long filaments can reach the surface, where they form large green "Rafts" which turn yellow as the algae ages. Some people consider these rafts to be unsightly, spoiling the appearance of the lake.

When it is growing vigorously it produces by photosynthesis large quantities of Oxygen during daylight hours, but reabsorbs some of this Oxygen overnight. This results in low Oxygen levels at daybreak, but sometimes VERY high levels by sunset. 110% saturation is not unusual.

When the Algae finishes its' life cycle it dies, sinks to the bottom and decomposes, returning nutrients to the sediment on the lake floor, and using up Oxygen in the process.

At the time of writing this article at the end of January, what is happening in the lake is quite disturbing. The recent rain has caused little runoff to top up the lake, and constant evaporation due to high temperatures and windy weather has kept the lake at much the same level that it was at when it last closed in June 2005.

The filamentous Algae which flourished soon after the lake closed has reached the end of its' life cycle. It is dying and decomposing, absorbing Oxygen, but producing none.

On the morning of Saturday January 14th, at two of the sources of stormwater runoff into the lake, at its' Western end, Oxygen levels were measured by a Waterwatch Group at 1.0 and 1.2 parts per million. This level cannot support marine life. The water was stratified, black and malodorous.

Less than an hour after obtaining these results Mick Kilp, operator of Aquamuse, reported the start of a fish kill at the opposite (Eastern) end of the lake. Gulls were feasting on dead fingerlings along the lake edge and it seemed that nearly all the larger fish in the lake had moved into shallow water in the far Eastern end.

People were scooping up big mullet and whiting in hand nets, and youths with spear guns were spearing them in knee deep water.



Mick Kilp, acknowledgment to Express Advocate photographer

The Waterwatch Group tested the water at two sites and recorded 2.3 and 3.2 parts per million Oxygen levels. These are far below safe levels for marine creatures. A Council Officer appeared at that time and ran further tests, with similar results.

The question of course is what could be done to avoid a major Fishkill event? The obvious answer would seem to be for Council to open the lake and allow the trapped fish to escape and the deoxygenated water to flush out to the ocean, and be replaced by new axygenated salt water over several tidal cycles until the lake closed off naturally.

The problem with this approach is that it is almost exactly what happened in the Copacabana lagoon in 2002, and that DID result in a fish kill. The fish in that case were the ones which had entered the lake on the incoming tide and stayed in the lagoon when it closed. They found themselves in little water, the algae had been exposed to the sun at low tides and was dead and decomposing, there was no futher rain, there was hot weather and rapidly decreasing Oxygen.

The fish only lasted a few days before they died.

Damned if you do, and Damned if you don't, fits the situation perfectly at Avoca!

Council Officers chose to continue to monitor the Oxygen levels. Fortunately daytime temperatures fell, wind ruffled the surface water and some rain fell. The disaster has been averted for the moment, but it will not take more than a few hot, windless days to return the lake to a

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bushcare report

CAROL GUMLEY BUSHCARE CONVENOR

perilous condition from which there is no simple escape.

So does all this mean that the filamentous Algae is the villain in the piece? In fact, NO! It is just the messenger! The real problem is the high level of nutrients which encourages the algal growth.

If some means could be devised to harvest the algae before it starts to die, the nutrient cycle could be broken, a large amount of nutrient could be removed from the lake and the algae (or rather its removal) could become the means of restoring the health of the lake.

This would have to be a long term annual event to have any chance of success and it would be many years before its benefit could be seen, but it could well be the only cost effective solution to an otherwise insoluble problem.

Council in fact announced their intention to harvest the algae in late December, however the machine which they trialled was totally unsuitable for working in shallow water and the trail had to be abandoned.

If someone can come up with a device which will remove the algal growth from shallow lagoons and lakes without disturbing the acid sulphate mud on the bottom, they could save quite a few Coastal lagoons in NSW.

Inventors, put on your thinking caps. But keep it simple!

Look after our lake

REPRINT FROM JUNE 1997 NEWSLETTER

Here's some things we can do to help us protect our lake system:

- 1) Ensure that the gutters outside one's home are kept clean. Most of the rubbish left in them ends up in the lake.
- 2) Don't wash cars in the driveway or in the street. Wash it on a grassed area. Detergents won't harm the grass, but they're a major hazard if allowed to enter the lake.
- 3) Never allow oil or grease to enter the stormwater drains. It should be collected in used plastic containers and placed in a rubbish bin or left at a garage.
- 4) Please keep dogs on a lead when exercising them in the vicinity of the lagoon and please collect the dog droppings and dispose of them in a rubbish bin. Dog droppings are probably a significant source of pollutants in the lake.

To residents of Avoca Beach and readers of this newsletter:

Welcome to the 'New Year'. Bulbararing Bushcare Group achieved a wonderful year of volunteer work in 2005, numbering 104 hours and 45 minutes.

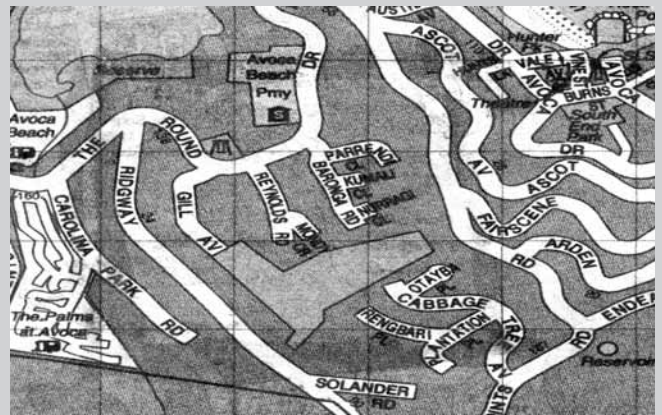
A lot of this can be attributed to our involvement with Avoca Beach Public School that began in 2004 and was followed up last year. The poster and sticker for the green bins opened up this lovely area to a wider group of people.

We gained some new members, and showed people that Bulbararing Reserve was not just a short cut to the school.

I hope this year we can rekindle our relationship with the school with our joint goals. Showing people living in Avoca why we do what we do, and how it can benefit the value of their homes, but more importantly create better habitat for our native fauna.

On a closing note, Eve, Tony, Romaine and I had a wonderful meeting last month in Avoca with two lovely women who are members of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council and its Elders group. We showed Jenny and Fay through Bulbararing Reserve and exchanged our knowledge. They were so pleased to see the return of the bushland to its true state (it was a dairy farm some 80 odd years ago). Fay is very keen to bring her grandchild though the reserve.

Let's hope we can work together in 2006 to extend our bushcare as an act of local reconciliation. If you would like to join in this work, please don't hesitate to ring me on 4381 0175.



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report on travel fellowship

JAMES LAWSON

As mentioned in the September 2005 newsletter, I travelled between September and November to study the role of alternative waste technologies and landfills in sustainable waste management by talking to government, businesses and community organisations in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada. I also attended the Sardinia 2005 International Waste Management and Landfill Symposium.

United Kingdom

Under the legally binding European Commission Landfill Directive and the Kyoto Greenhouse Reduction Agreement, the UK has a number of economic, social, political and environmental drivers to rapidly implement alternative waste treatment options to reduce its reliance on landfills and to slow down the effects of global warming. Currently more than 75% or 28 million tonnes of municipal solid waste produced in England is landfilled each year.

The European Landfill Directive set aggressive targets to specifically reduce the amount of Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW), the main contributor to the production of the greenhouse gas, methane, being disposed of to landfill. BMW is the part of waste that will decompose with or without the presence of air, and typically includes paper, garden wastes, kitchen waste, wood and natural textiles.

In order to achieve the ambitious Landfill Directive targets and to offset the financial penalties of £150 per tonne for not reaching them, which equates to fines up to £500,000 per day (or up to £7 million for some local authorities), the Government introduced a number of measures including development of a National Waste Strategy (Waste Strategy 2000), which outlined performance targets for recycling and composting for local authorities to meet.

Canada

Canada unlike the United Kingdom is not faced with mandatory recycling targets set by overarching government bodies, but still faces the challenge of meeting key sustainable and waste reduction targets like every other developed country. Canada with a population of 32 million people produces approximately 31 millions tonnes of waste every year, and has a waste diversion rate of close to 25%. According to Environment Canada, landfill sites account for 38% of Canada's total methane emissions. This figure is not surprising given that the City of Toronto alone has 158 closed landfill sites.

The Regional Municipality of Niagara and the City of Hamilton are clearly focused on the introduction of alternative waste technology to help solve its landfill dilemma and achieve its 65% waste diversion rate. By the end of 2013, four of the regions' five landfills are scheduled to close, not due to reaching its full capacity but by the community pressures on the Government Environment Agency to

close. In January 2004, both regions joined together for a long-term study called "WastePlan" to plan for long term waste disposal capacity.

United States of America

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, since 1980 the total annual generation of municipal waste has increased by more than 50% to its 2003 level of just over 235 million tonnes. The number of landfills has decreased from just under 8,000 in 1988 to just over 1700 in 2002, with landfill capacity on a national level said to be "sufficient" by the US EPA.

I was fortunate to be able to visit the California Integrated Waste Management Board (www.ciwmb.ca.gov) and talk to key staff from a number of sections including Recycling Technologies, Waste Prevention and Market Development, and State and Local Assistance.

The Board have recognised a number of barriers to the implementation of these new technologies and is not too dissimilar to other countries. These include lack of political leadership and support, lack of funding; conversion technologies not seen as economically competitive; and lack of reliable data on lifecycle benefits and emissions technology performance.

As a result of my Churchill Fellowship I have made the following conclusions:

- There will always be a need for landfills for the disposal of wastes but the introduction of alternative waste technologies are on the increase due to sustainability becoming one of the major selection techniques.
- Innovation in waste strategies and waste education continues to prosper.
- The establishment of waste targets is sometimes clearly unachievable and has the potential to raise false expectations of the industry.
- The emergence of new waste technologies has created hope for Governments to solve the waste problem but many communities are still sceptical about their performance and affordability.

My recommendations include encouraging Local Government to establish viable alternatives to landfill based disposal; return a higher proportion of waste levy for planning and infrastructure; and further examining opportunities to establish resource recovery options at landfills.

My trip was not all work, though. As a side note, I was accompanied by my pregnant wife and young (1.5 years) daughter Summer.

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June 5	April 17	April 15
August 7 (AGM)	May 15	May 20
October 2	June 19	June 17
December	July 17	July 15
	August 21	August 19
	September 18	September 16
	October 16	October 21
	November 20	November 18

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ABCA is a community group for residents and non-resident property owners which tries to protect the relatively relaxed lifestyle that Avoca's village character and natural beauty offers. We support and initiate plans which promote this lifestyle and work to oppose proposals that threaten it.

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

The Association's newsletter The Avoca Beach Review is published every three months and hand delivered to all households.

It is financed by advertisements from local businesses who can show their support for the community and promote themselves to the community through the advertising. Rates \$40 for 6cm x 6cm.

Contributions and letters are welcome. Please send to:
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