2) The NSW state government, the NPWS, and Sydney Water, need to consider whether to jointly or collectively prosecute Wollongong City Council for this ecological vandalism, and to extract the money that will be needed to carry out necessary remediation and repairs.

3) There needs to be community consultation with our group before anything further is done and, then, only with our written approval as we seem to be the only ones with sufficient environmental knowledge.

4) Wollongong City Council and Sydney Water and NPWS need to create a joint written policy statement as to how they intend in future to live up to their legal obligations to protect and conserve Bellambi Lagoon’s saltmarsh, mangroves, Bellfrogs, rare protected and proscribed flora and fauna, against generational change amongst council officers which invariably leads to loss of knowledge and ignorant inappropriate lawn-mowing and construction work.

5) The concrete pipes installed to date need to be dug out and removed, and the original swales (Green and Gold Bellfrog habitat) need to be revegetated and fully restored. It will cost about half a million dollars to repair the damage done to date, and needs to be done under the supervision of our landcare group.

Yours faithfully

Chris ILLERT

REFERENCES:
Bellambi Lagoon Protection & Regeneration Society
2/3 Birch Crescent East Corrimal, NSW 2518. ph/fax 02 4283 3009

26/5/2004

copies to:
1) Wollongong City Council, General Manager (fax 0242277277)
2) the Minister for Energy & Utilities, the Hon Frank Sartor (fax 0292284711)
3) the Director General of NPWS, Dept. of Environment & Conservation, (fax 0295856555)
4) the Minister for Environment, Hon. Bob Debus, (fax 0292811115)

- re Wollongong City Council’s recent destruction of Salicornia saltmarsh, grassy swales, Green & Gold Bellfrogs and habitat etc -

Dear Sir/Madam,

further to our previous letter dated 25/5/2004, we would like to submit the attached documents including a letter from the Hon Bob Debus, dated 5th April 2004 showing that DEC has for some time been aware of the existence of Green and Gold Bellfrogs at Bellambi Lagoon, and that Wollongong City Council itself “has received Environmental Trust Funding to conduct work on stormwater management and community education for the Green and gold bell frog ... a local community group is understood to have also received Threatened Species Network funding to carry out habitat creation ... at Port Kembla”. Mr Ron Powers, of our group has been working with Dr Tony Miskiewes of Wollongong City Council’s environmental division for more than a year specifically in relation to Bellambi Lagoon’s frog population.

In spite of this council workers have in the last week been destroying known bellfrog habitat, reedy freshwater swails from drains emptying into the lagoon, and Salicornia saltmarsh expanses on adjoining mudflats, with no EIS and no community consultation.

On a walkabout the lagoon today with Mike McKeon of WCC the accompanying engineer appeared not to understand even the basic notions that grassy swails (1) provide frog habitat, (2) dissipate stormwater energy, (3) absorb silt thereby keeping the lagoon water clean and the channels from silting up, (4) and the reeds catch litter which community members can clean up manually. The council officers even expressed doubt that frogs were present in the drains about the lagoon and said that now that several had been filled in and pipes cemented in place to spew stormwater and litter into the middle of the enclosed lagoon there was little chance of removing those pipes and restoring the grassy swales to their condition of a fortnight ago.

Dr Arthur White, the renowned frog expert has visited Mr Powers’ house here at Bellambi, where he microchipped two local bellfrogs and personally saw Mr Powers’ bellfrog rehabilitation pond in his backyard for creatures that get injured.

Yours faithfully

Chris Illert, Ron Power
Council bulldozer rips off ‘badge of honour’

BY CHANTAL GIBBIE

UNTIL last week, Bellambi Lagoon was the pride of the community, but now it is proving to be a liability.

Volunteers were ecstatic at seeing the Council bulldozer rip out the dunes around the lagoon.

Mr. Miller said the unfiltered sand was a threat to the environment and was destroying the habitat of many species.

“This is engineering worst practice and what I’m offended by is that we’re unable to recognize when environmental best practice is not in their face,” he said.

Volunteers were concerned that the Council had not consulted the community before proceeding with the work.

“The Council has not consulted with the community, and we’re concerned that they’re not taking into account the environmental impact of their actions,” a volunteer said.

However, Mr. Miller defended the Council’s actions, saying that they were necessary to protect the environment.

“The Council is committed to protecting the environment, and we believe that this work is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of the lagoon,” he said.

The community is divided on the issue, with some volunteers protesting the Council’s actions and others supporting their efforts to protect the environment.

Source: Llanwarra Mercury, Monday May 31, 2004
Bellambi boiloover

Bellambi residents have launched a scathing attack on the council’s decision to divert stormwater pipes straight into a pristine coastal lagoon.

Bellambi environmentalist Chris Illert, President of the Bellambi Lagoon Protection & Regeneration Society, fears that years of community work could be undone by the Wollongong City Council’s decision to direct stormwater straight into Bellambi Lagoon.

But Wollongong City Council Director of City Services Mike Hyde has called for calm and an opportunity to further investigate any potential impact arising from the works.

Council is to meet onsite today with National Parks and Wildlife Service representatives and leading ecologist Dr Arthur White to assess the works.

They were discovered early last week and led to concerns over a number of environmental issues, the most serious being the possible destruction of a green and gold bell frog habitat, a prosecuteable offence.

While appealed at the work that has been carried out without community consultation or any consideration of environmental impacts, Mr Illert is most distressed by what it says about council’s work processes.

“Over $1 million has been spent on restoring this area and the local community has given countless hours to keeping it pristine, yet they can go ahead and undo years of established work,” he said.

“What they don’t understand is that this was a delicate ecosystem that had been designed to work like clockwork and they have gone and stuck pipes that will get litter and filth right out into the lagoon.”

The retired professor of biology said the fallout could be disastrous, with not only irreversible environmental damage likely, but if the lagoon fills up because of the removal of reedy swales.

Continued page 2
Bellambi boilover

A FROM page 2, there is the potential for hardflooding in business and residential areas.

To place the pipes, council destroyed swales that acted to filter nutrients and dissipate water speed, with investigations now investigating whether they also provided habitat for the endangered green and gold bell frog.

Mr Illert said council has not only acted with “environmental worst practice” but reneged on its longstanding agreement to extend the swales.

The Northern Leader understands that contrary to established protocol, the sensitive project completely bypassed council’s Environmental division.

Mr Hyde admitted the work should never have been done without the division’s input and cannot explain how it happened.

He has, however, provided assurances that measures were being put in place to ensure such a mistake could not happen again.

He also stressed that council has no record of sightings of the green and gold bell frog in that area of the lagoon.

“There have been no sightings of the green and gold bell frog in that area of the lagoon,” he said.

He also said council has not made a mistake, that much is patently obvious, but it is being made out that we have destroyed Bellambi Lagoon which simply isn’t the case.”

Mr Hyde said that as well as establishing the extent of the work’s impact, council was now putting in place steps to ensure that all work that may have an impact on Wollongong waterways will now have a site-specific management plan.

Mr Hyde said that like any big organisation things have the potential to go wrong, but the most important thing to ensure from here is that the health of the lagoon is everybody’s focus.

Ward 2 councillor Janice Kershaw expressed amazement and disgust at what has happened.

“How in this day and age can this sort of thing happen?” she asked.

“It has been a complete stuff up – there is no excuse for it,” she said.

Councillor has just blown it.

To see more photos

News in brief

Got news? Ring the Northern Leader on 4285 4050
Bellambi Lagoon Protection & Regeneration Society
2/3 Birch Crescent, East Corrimal, NSW 2518. ph/fax (02) 42833009

TO

Mr Aldo Pennini (Chief of Staff), representing the Premier of NSW
press release by Premiere Carr, dated 27 February 2003, “$150,000 for coastal
dunes” (Where has it all gone??). Also:
(your ref 35890/D15813 (Kim Yeadon MP), dated 5 August 2002),
(your ref 36465/D17323 (Kim Yeadon MP), dated 12 Dec 2002),
(your reference MSO/00670 37534, dated 11 August 2003),
(your reference MSO/07298, dated 31 May 2004),
(your ref MSO/11080, dated 21 February 2005),
via fax 9228 4711

the Minister for the Environment
the Hon Bob Debus MP
(your references MOF 13182, MOF 13091: dated 28 June 2004)
(your reference D15813, dated 16 July 2002)
via fax 9228 3166

the Minister for Fisheries and Mineral Resources
the Hon Ian Macdonald MP
(your ref MF02001614, dated 29 August 2002),
via fax 9228 3722

Mr Trevor Brown,
Environmental Project Officer, Wollongong City Council,
(your reference W:MN, file SU21823 (J. Shepherd), dated 2 Sept 2004)
(your ref EH.TB, file SU21823, dated 24 February 2005)
via fax 4227 7277

- re the restoration of Green and Golden Bellfrog habitat as per the report:
“review of environmental factors for construction of drainage swales and
frog breeding pond at Bellambi Lagoon”, Works Division, Wollongong
City Council, Feb. 2005 -

Dear Sirs,

the initial needless destruction of Bellambi Lagoon’s bellfrog habitat
and other local vegetation was well documented at the time in the press:

1) “Council bulldozer rips off badge of honour”, Illawarra Mercury, 31 May
2004, p 5

2) “Council’s ‘incompetence’ raised in Parliament”, Illawarra Mercury, 1 June
2004: plus Editorial on page 18, “Council fails to consult community”.

2) “Bellambi boilover, red faces over lagoon stormwater pipes”, Northern
Leader, 3 June 2004, p 1

3) “Council pipes down, filtration to lagoon will be restored”, Illawarra
Mercury, 4 June 2004, p 9

4) “Lagoon environment blunder, Council acts on Bellambi drainage works
slip-up”, the Wollongong Advertiser, 9 June 2004, p 1.

5) “Bellambi Lagoon remedial works”, Northern Leader, 10 June 2004, p 3.

6) “dune devastation, Corrimal coastal chainsaw massacre”, Northern Leader,
12 August 2004, p 1.
Council did publish a limited formal apology in local newspapers, at that time, however almost an entire year has been allowed to pass (one whole breeding season) with no actual remedial action occurring out in the real world - leaving local bellfrog populations to exist without habitat in the interim. The real world biological imperative here, is that the local frog populations need to survive NOW, in order to ultimately benefit from any FUTURE remediation that may occur.

The copy of Wollongong City Council’s report, received by us today, is sufficient for remedial work to commence along the lines of Option 1 on page 13.

However the report is unscholarly and disappointing in several respects, failing to cite relevant prior references and, on page 16, lamely commenting “it is not clear whether the site was surveyed before or after the restoration works undertaken at the lagoon in the mid-1990’s”. Bellambi Lagoon is in fact one of the better studied ecosystems in the region. Some relevant references being:

4) Patterson Britton & Partners Pty Ltd (April 1993). “Bellambi Lagoon improvement works, statement of environmental effects”, commissioned by Public Works Department South Coast Region. This report plus associated hydrological modelling actually cost the NSW taxpayer something like $90,000, and it is quite a good report, deserving of citation in any bibliography.

Apart from such lapses in scholarship in Council’s report, there are management-type problems of a practical nature that it fails to deal with. Specifically, a couple of the houses along the northern end of Bellambi Lagoon are owned by known serial dumpers of everything from refrigerators to industrial waste and garden refuse. These few problem residents have no regard for the environment and dump this stuff into the already existing trashracks and water channels. They have been formally reported on several occasions and continue to offend despite Wollongong City Council’s Mike McKeon having been called on several occasions over the dumping of very large items outside back fences, onto the grass adjoining the present cycletrack, from where the only likely outcome is furtive dumping in the drains and waterways.
Council has mollycoddled these offenders and facilitated their illegal dumping by allowing these houses to have gates on their back fences opening onto the reserve. Most houses don’t have these rear gates and, opening as they do onto the cycletrack and lagoon, there is no other likely purpose other than illegal backdoor dumping into waterways and as access for teen-hooligans riding illegal unregistered motorbikes on and about the cycleway reed-beds and dunes where they do enormous environmental damage beyond the view of police or ordinance officers who lack direct road access.

The bellfrog ponds are proposed along this northern end of the lagoon where there exist known serial dumpers of washing machines refrigerators and other waste as well as teen hooligans on illegal motorcycles. Thus Wollongong City Council needs to bite the bullet in relation to basic Ordinance enforcement issues relating to dumping, plus preventative measures such as banning backfence gates that open onto sensitive areas about the lagoon in the vicinity of trashracks drains frogponds reedbeds and waterways.

Furthermore the Premiere Bob Carr (in a press release dated 27th February 2003) announced $150,000 for Bellambi Lagoon - an amount which was immediately matched by Wollongong City Council - yet two years later this community is unaware of any of that $300,000 having ever been spent here at Bellambi Lagoon. In fact our litter cleanup group and our landcare group are still using old equipment originally donated decades ago by CALM - most of our basic tools have rusted or broken, we have one small chainsaw to clear fallen trees from 5km of walkways, and only one spraypack left to spray weeds throughout an area of several square kilometres of dunes bushland littoral-rainforest and lagoon. The state Government needs to reconsider its indebtedness to, and support for, our community’s voluntary landcare and maintenance groups which are the oldest in this region. These neglected groups, properly resourced, can also assist in protecting and maintaining the proposed frogponds after they are built.

Finally Wollongong City Council’s environmental division has in recent decades overseen complete eradication of the protected native grey mangrove Avicennia marina throughout its entire local government area extending from the Royal National Park to Lake Illawarra, most recently permitting cementing-over of the last surviving saltmarsh/mangrove wetland at Pioneer Estate (just north of Bellambi Lagoon) where, also, there were the last remaining coastal cabbage palms and examples of Hibiscus diversifolia. And now that our
group has pointed out to Council that the last half dozen protected native grey mangrove specimens, of the original Illawarra genetic stock, survive now only in Bellambi Lagoon - Council’s Environment Division is circulating anti-mangrove propaganda from the same right-wing lobbyists who deny the greenhouse effect. One such particularly choice article in this vein is by David Rydstrand, a Pauline Hanson/One Nation candidate. Our group asserts that Wollongong City Council’s total eradication of the protected native grey mangrove throughout its entire LGA is nothing to brag about, and that the officers in Council’s Environmental Division need to inform themselves by reading


Both are highly respected and authoritative sources. The former explains the right-wing political basis of crackpot pseudo-science surrounding anti-environmental eco-denialism, whilst the latter explains the actual science of basic dynamic concepts such as zonation and succession (specifically read paragraph 3, page 425).

Yours faithfully

Chris ILLERT (President)
Appendix 4

NEWS RELEASE

Premier of New South Wales
Australia

Thursday February 27, 2003

Premier Carr announces $150,000 for East Corrimal Sand Dunes restoration

The Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr today announced the State Government will spend $150,000 to help restore the East Corrimal sand dunes, which were badly damaged by summer bushfires.

Mr Carr said the funding would go towards replanting burnt-out areas and weed control. Further planting would continue next year.

More than 15 hectares of reserve were burnt out late last year, leaving much of the sand dunes exposed.

"If you leave an area like this for too long it will become degraded, infested by weeds and subject to erosion," Mr Carr said.

"If action is not taken, then it could take the environment years to recover.

"Our immediate investment and quick response will see a long-term benefit."

Mr Carr made the announcement while launching the State Government's Illawarra Policy at the Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre.

The sand dune work followed representations from State MP for Keira, Mr David Campbell.

"David impressed upon me how severely the dunes suffered in the fires ... and we acted."

Mr Carr said the restoration project was an example of State and Local Government working in partnership with the local community.

The State Government funding will be matched by a $150,000 contribution from Wollongong City Council.

"Groups like the Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society do a great job with their voluntary work on weed management and other activities at both the lagoon and the dunes," Mr Carr said.

The $150,000 funding to restore the East Corrimal sand dunes is previously unannounced recurrent expenditure.
Daniela Reverberi, Secretary and Research Officer

Bellambi Lagoon Dunecare Group

A few recommendations (at short notice) regarding regeneration project at Bellambi sand dunes.

It is understood that the State Government has granted $150 thousand, with another $150 by Wollongong City Council, totaling $300 thousand for the restoration of vegetation and dune stabilization after the arson of Bellambi Dunes caused much devastation.

Some Recommendations

(1). That NO GRANT MONEY be made available for internal or external use to do “feasibility” or “vegetation” or “management” plans. This means that ALL MONEY must be spent on the actual project. It does not take a brain the size of a planet to see what needs to be done. There is an abundance of written material and experienced advice available for FREE and there are of course Council Officers and other Government Officers available. If at this stage some think a study is required then I would instruct that it should be done for FREE. Council has a library and photocopy machines, etc, which could be made available to cover costs BUT NOT FOR payment of “services”. If some people think that someone should be paid a “study” then the plot has been lost and the GRANT OFFER SHOULD BE RESCINDED.

Sorry to labour the point and if this is a bit strong but I assume many of us have seen nonsense before and there is no time to waste beating around the bush. All this needs to be stated at the outset.

(2). DON'T start any planting during the drought time or hot season. Plants will die and it is very hard to get water to the dunes.

(3). Bare open patches whilst looking like the most in need of replanting are not always the best places. Planting around the border of bare and vegetated patches offers more shade and protection for the new plants and a greater chance for their survival.

(4). DON'T use fertiliser because the wrong type can kill native plants. If there is an insistence on fertiliser use then the matter should first be carefully researched (for free).

(5). Limit the number of walking trails to the main fire trail and two trails in a west/east direction. One of the two east/west trails should be next to southern fence of the sewage works and the other just a little to the south were they are presently located. Trails and fencing are costly, difficult to maintain, and don't serve much purpose other than to make work for people (who already have enough).

(6). Fencing to keep people out and protect vegetation is important.

(7). A few tools be purchased for the community volunteers:-
   * two 15 litre spray packs
   * some pruning saws
   * long handled claws for collection rubbish
   * a small aluminium boat for collecting rubbish in the lagoon, and spraying Bitou Bush at the edges of the lagoon - aerial spraying is not advisable in that location and the area difficult to access on foot.

(8). On a topic UNRELATED TO THE GRANT MONEY - there needs to be greater security to prevent arson and vandalism. Proper legislative measures are required.

It would be helpful if fire trucks arrived with water in them. It would also be helpful if fire fighters did not wait for an hour or two watching the fire because it is good to let it (ie, the sand dunes) burn - we need to get rid of the rubbish undergrowth (ie. Lemandra sp, Accacia sp, Eucalyptus sp, Banksia sp, Leptospermum sp, etc) - it helps plant growth.

(9). The former Dept. of Lands and Water Conservation (it now has a new name) should be consulted and in particular Daryl Goldrick who has had an interest in Bellambi Lagoon sand dunes for a couple of decades and has much expertise to offer.
Shifting sands at Bellambi Lagoon

BY Paul Faby

The future of Bellambi's historic sand dunes has become the focus of a heated dispute between a local environment group and Wollongong City Council.

Workers have been undertaking regeneration work on the northern dunes, which the council said would ensure the long-term prosperity of the site.

But the members of the Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society have argued that the work will ultimately destroy the famous sand hills.

"They've turned what was a lovely green area with birds and animals into a desert where nothing will grow except weeds," society spokesman Chris Illert said.

Mr Illert said a recent decision to remove West Australian Wattle plants from the dunes had left the sand exposed to wind erosion.

"The wattle has been there for 20 years and it's a part of the ecosystem," he said.

"With nothing to stabilise them, those hills will just blow away onto the homes and roads and there will be nothing left."

Mr Illert said the habitat of native birds and animals had also been destroyed, leaving them open to attacks from predators such as cats.

The regeneration work has also raised the ire of Alan Carriage, a member of the local Wadi Wadi Aboriginal Community.

Mr Carriage said the removal of the wattle threatened to expose ancient Aboriginal middens buried under the sands.

Regeneration of the dunes began in January as part of a federally funded Community Development Employment Project (CDEP).

Eight local Aboriginal workers are taking part in the project.

Elwarram CDEP manager Annabel Uschultz said the workers were under the constant supervision of a qualified bush regeneration worker and the project was providing the group with valuable skills and training.

"The team is working really well and it's a very positive atmosphere," she said.

Wollongong City Council's natural areas coordinator Paul Formosa said he was extremely disappointed that the Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society had not consulted with the council over their concerns.

Mr Formosa said the regeneration had been carefully planned and was designed to gradually remove weeds - such as the West Australian Wattle - and replace them with native plants.

"The long-term goal is to have a self-sustaining ecosystem with native plants and no weeds," he said.

"We planted 450 native species last week, there will be another 450 species planted this week and that planting will continue each week."

Despite claims from Mr Illert that many of the new plants were dying due to a lack of protection from direct sunlight, Mr Formosa said workers were following the manual on restoration.
Sir

It is nice that Paul Formosa of WCC does not plan to recklessly chainsaw all the *Acacia saligna* (West Australian Wattle), from Bellambi Lagoon beach dunes (Mercury 15/3/06). After a large fire in 2003, and successful lobbying by local community landcare volunteers, the State Government and Wollongong City Council jointly funded this restoration project which is finally underway.

The world's most reputable scientists now agree that the greenhouse effect is accelerating and will have a greater impact than initially thought. Therefore Paul Formosa needs to understand the likely consequences of naively proceeding with "pest" tree removal in the vigorous fashion that we see in the Bellambi dunes. Some birds and animals need the existing wattle tree canopy, whilst some foredunes would erode away without Bitou Bush. It will take years for new native trees to grow tall enough to replace the canopy trees presently being removed - if they grow at all, given the 90% death-rate of native trees planted in the dunes lately. Paul Formosa needs to proceed more thoughtfully because the world is physically different now, and non-native plants can sometimes play a valuable role.

Local landcare volunteers are also concerned that excessive Glyphosate spraying of Bitou Bush in the southern dune area, without replacement by native plants, has given Asparagus Fern a competitive edge enabling it to spread like wild-fire. Asparagus Fern is much harder to remove than Bitou Bush so, in this respect too, landcare is going backward.

Paul Formosa should understand that, after 25 years of volunteer landcare and cleanup experience, some local community residents do understand local plants and the environment. There are tricks to planting trees successfully. Planting them in prominent areas for greater public relations exposure is unwise. This visibly exposes them to vandals and drying westerly and easterly winds. There also needs to better consultation and communication with community landcare volunteers, and respect for their collective experience, wisdom, and qualifications. They will still be here after the present money has gone.

Chris Illert
Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR ILLAWARRA MERCURY

From: Chris ILLERT
2/3 Birch Crescent, East Corrimal, NSW 2518.
Phone/fax 42833009 (Address and phone/fax for verification purposes only)

Sir,

Jennifer Neil’s opinions (Mercury, 11th April 2006), about local coastal dune regeneration, ignore the realities of coastal geomorphology over decadal timescales.

Our group founded voluntary community land-care in this region, winning the very first Healthy City Awards, subsequently Rise and Shine Awards, and has continued to do so every year since. Additionally, we served on a committee, which won the KESAB Metro Pride Award in 1993 and the Gold Rise and Shine Award in 2001. Had we not landscaped and stabilized several kilometers of fore-dunes over the last two decades, East Corrimal’s sandy beaches would long-since have eroded, exposing underlying rock, and the present dune system would simply not exist.

I have photographs showing how, in the 1970’s and early 1980’s, the entire East Corrimal dune system from the Caravan Park to the Sewage Works was bare shifting sand, mere wind channels and ripples, with almost nothing growing on it.

Bellambi’s historic Aboriginal middens were severely eroded and scoured by wind and ocean. On any weekend teams of up to 20 horse riders scuffed fore-dunes on their way up and down “Killer Hill”, formerly about 40 meters high, wearing it down by about 15 meters and causing a white erosion stripe that could be seen as far away as Bulli Lookout. The beach fore-dune barrier became non-existent in places and sometimes, on very high tides, salt-water flowed into the hind-dunes.

Initially working with the Soil Conservation Service through the 1980’s, small grants were obtained to landscape the fore-dunes into a continuous unbroken barrier against the sea, stabilize it with vegetation, and construct five kilometers of pine-log walkways (more than in all the rest of Wollongong combined) to keep people off the re-growth. Over following decades, hundreds of local residents planted thousands of indigenous plants, with Colin Markham officially planting the fifty-thousandth tree on top of “Killer Hill” (Advertiser, 7th August 1991, page 5). In the early 1990’s we successfully lobbied for, and helped administer, a million dollar grant from Sydney Water to landscape Bellambi Lagoon, creating a new island in the reed-bed and installing half a dozen trash racks about the lagoon, in the process winning an award.

In view of these ongoing contributions over decadal timescales, and the fact that our group appears in Wollongong City Council’s current list of community organizations, it is surprising that Jennifer Neil produced her “Vegetation Management Plan (2005)” without ever talking to us, nor to the Northern Illawarra Aboriginal Collective Inc. which is the only registered Aboriginal organization in the northern suburbs.

Chris ILLERT,
President, Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society,
East Corrimal
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ILLARARRA MERCURY, 21 April 2006

From Daniela Reverberi
2/3 Birch Crescent, East Corrimal. 2518. Phone/fax 42833009

Sir/Madam,

Jennifer Neil of Tree creeper Indigenous Land Management, (11 April 2006) is presumptuous about local landcare volunteers. Perhaps she'd spoken to us she would not have made numerous errors in her report, "Bellambi Lagoon 2005 Management Plan", from which she appears to be quoting.

For the record Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration Society, applied for the grant, which paid the wages to produce the report. She describes us as uneducated, and typical ignorant white Australians who don't understand the local environment, that we should get TAFE training, and a person who will remain nameless told us to "keep your bib out of landcare", now that there is money available and "real professionals .... can take over". Where have these "real professionals" been for the last 25 years? It is our group that has done the really unglamorous dirty, sweaty, physically demanding clean up jobs, as well as the tree planting, weeding, produced scientific documents, etc, and all for free. Yet we aren't good enough to even be spoken to.

Jennifer needs to understand her comments are unprofessional and just plain bad manners. Also simply quoting Latin names does not in itself constitute sound and practical ecological management. Even our local high school kids can quote Latin names. It is important to understand and apply proper internal referencing in semi-professional documents, even when they are not anonymously peer reviewed scholarly articles. Jennifer falsely assumes without evidence that local landcare volunteers planted Melaleuca amillaris (Giant Honey-myrtle), Acacia saligna (West Australian Wattle), and Ammophila arenaria (Marram Grass). Again good science is about evidence, use of primary sources, and objectivity.

There is a rare species of Melaleuca, which resembles M. amillaris, and perhaps Jennifer would be wise to consult us before pulling them out. There are declared noxious weeds that warrant more serious consideration.

For the record it was the then named Soil Conservation Service which introduced Chrysanthemoides monilifera (Bitou Bush) to NSW to stabilise sand dunes, although they used to deny this. I will be polite and not mention those responsible for the other species Jennifer refers to.

Lastly a number of our members do indeed have TAFE qualifications, university degrees, masters, degrees, Ph.D's, but what really matters most is heart and soul and they have plenty of that.

Yours faithfully

[Name Redacted]

D. Reverberi, B. Sc, B. Math, B. Env. Sci, Dip. Ed, TAFE Cert. Weed Control
Bellambi Lagoon Protection and Regeneration, Litter Cleanup C. E. O., East Corrimal
Protecting precious estuaries

WARREN JONES

WOLLONGONG City Council has adopted a plan to save 10 creeks and lagoons in the area.

Towradgi Creek, Bellambi Lagoon and Fairy Creek are examples of estuaries that have felt the ill-effects of development, including invasion by weeds, pollution and sedimentation — and many local wetland areas face similar challenges.

If the preferred framework for protecting the waterways is carried out, there will be more than $1 million spent on the creeks over the next three years.

Roughly half of that sum will come from grants, with Wollongong City Council paying the remainder.

Two of the more expensive projects planned include the control of road erosion at Stanwell Creek at Stanwell Park, with an estimated total cost of $130,000, and the enhancement of habitats for Green and Golden Bell Frogs at four different estuaries, with an estimated cost of $53,000.

Also included in the plan is work to relocate pathways at Bellambi Lagoon and the erection of barriers to stop people from mowing important foreshore vegetation.


Also, in July 2006, Council endorsed the extension of the program to include the 10 additional creeks and lagoons that the current plan is intended to cover and protect.

The implementation of the plan for the estuaries will depend on the availability of funds and Council staff.

Wollongong City Council is not required by law to implement all of the strategies in the plan, but it is obliged to have the plan in place and to demonstrate that it has a commitment to looking after the areas.

At the top of the plan’s priority list is restricting access to threatened habitats, preparing storm water management plans, dune stabilisation work at Bellambi and protecting fish habitats at Bellambi and Tom Thumb Lagoons.

ICAC hearing for Council this month

THE Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) will hold a public hearing centred on members and practices of the Wollongong City Council Planning Division.

The hearing will commence in Sydney on February 18 following an ICAC investigation into WCC which began in December 2005.

Council's General Manager David Farmer said Council has formed a 'willing partnership' with ICAC and wanted to reassure residents that Council has recently undergone many changes.

"Council has been in full cooperation with the ICAC, supplying a great deal of both required and voluntary data in an effort to actively support the ICAC and demonstrate that corrupt behaviour of any form has no place in our organisation," Mr Farmer said.

"Simply, Council has never had tolerance for misconduct of any sort and we view the allegations to be put before the hearing with the utmost seriousness.

"We are committed to maintaining an organisation administered by robust policies, systems and procedures."

The announcement coincides with a decision by Council to act on suggestions for reducing the risk of corruption outlined in an ICAC Position Paper on the issue of corruption.