

Working to Revive, Renew and Protect the Ecology of Lake Macquarie NSW

Crackdown on Sewer Connection Imminent

The Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee has expressed concerns at the number of properties within the catchment which are not connected to public sewer systems.



Keith Stevenson Inspects an on-site system

The poor performance levels of many on-site sewage systems has been identified as a potential public health risk and harmful to Lake water quality.

Of great concern is the number of property owners who have neglected to convert to the extended sewer system. Despite the installation of the sewer extension, up to three years ago in some areas, a worrying number of residents still rely on existing on-site treatment facilities.

Lake Macquarie City Council's Environmental

Management Coordinator, Keith Stevenson, said new legislation had been introduced in response to recent water quality issues, such as the Wallis Lake incident in 1997. "Property owners that have had the sewer extended to their premises are encouraged to connect to it as soon as possible. If residents do not connect their premises to the sewer in a reasonable time, then Council can issue an order which is enforceable by law," said Keith Stevenson.

In recent years there have been increasing concerns that some on-site systems fail to adequately treat and dispose of wastewater. Serious

incidents of water contamination, like the Wallis Lake oysters case, have brought the issue to the forefront of health and environmental concerns. In the Lake Macquarie and catchment area, poor sewage management could have serious impacts on the water quality of the Lake. Failure to act on the lessons learnt by other regions in New South Wales would potentially have major economic and lifestyle consequences for the local community.

"By connecting premises to the sewer quickly, property owners are contributing to a cleaner and safer environment. In addition, residents can avoid the expense of receiving a Council order or having to obtain approval to operate existing systems," said Keith Stevenson.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Council's Environmental Management Coordinator on 4921 0333. 



Peter Nelson, Chairman Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee

Welcome to the second edition of Living Lake Macquarie. Since the last time I wrote, the Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator has been hard at work in coordinating Public Works and generating awareness and interest in the programs to revive Lake Macquarie.

In the coming months a series of Community Service Announcements will screen on our local television networks. These advertisements will inform you about ways you can help in the restoration process.

We have also launched the Living Lake Macquarie web site, www.livinglakemacquarie.org, which is a must visit for anyone interested in the future of the Lake. It contains information on the key issues confronting the Lake and also provides details of some of the works in progress and set to commence.

I must pass on a big thank you to all the people who took part in the Living Lake Macquarie Community Survey in March and April. As you will read in this newsletter, the results revealed some quite interesting statistics. The Survey Report is considered a very important tool in shaping the direction of future education programs, to target areas where awareness of key issues is very low.

The physical works around Lake Macquarie continue. As you'll see on page 2, the stabilisation of Salts Bay is set to commence and this should provide everyone with long term access and protect a resource that has been in decline in recent years.

Peter Nelson

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Planting Seeds For The Lake's Future

More than 500 volunteers from Sydney took part in the Olympic Landcare Challenge on the shores of Lake Macquarie in May.

Photo courtesy of Ric Woods



John Hughson, Landcare Resource Officer

The event saw over 15,000 trees planted on the northern foreshores of the Lake. It was coordinated by the Landcare Resource Officer for Lake Macquarie and Newcastle, John Hughson. He said the volunteers had contributed to a highly successful day.

"It is estimated that the work done on the day was worth around \$45,000 in labour costs

alone. The Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator also provided funding for preparatory work, without which the Olympic Landcare Challenge would not have been possible," he said.

The tree planting focused on the littoral zones along the shorelines of the Lake. These areas have long been a key area of concern in the fight to revitalise Lake Macquarie.

"The Olympic Landcare Challenge displayed the benefits of close working relationships between local community groups and the Council, which is committed to renewing and protecting Lake Macquarie as a natural resource," said Mr. Hughson.

The emergence of Landcare groups in Lake Macquarie has grown steadily in recent years. The number of registered groups has risen from 25 to 45 in the last eight months, including the creation of a special roving group dedicated to addressing problems around the Lake.

"Landcare groups are an ideal way for the community to play a role in the improvement of Lake Macquarie," said John Hughson.

Anyone interested in information on Landcare groups in Lake Macquarie should contact John Hughson on 4921 0392. 📍

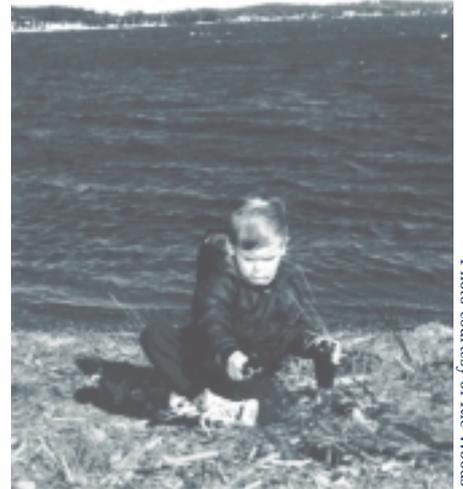


Photo courtesy of Ric Woods

EIS Clears The Path For Public Works At Salts Bay

An extensive Public Works program designed as a lifeline for the ailing Salts Bay will begin in the latter half of 2000.



It is expected that tenders will be called upon approval of the Development Application by Lake Macquarie City Council.

The stabilisation of Salts Bay is a joint initiative of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator, Lake Macquarie City Council and the Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC). The preservation of land at Salts Bay, which separates Swansea

Channel from wetlands in Black Neds Bay, was identified as a priority action in the Premier's Lake Macquarie Task Force Report in 1999.

Hunter Regional Director for DLWC, Cathy Cole, said the project proposal was judged to have a positive impact on a variety of elements within Lake Macquarie and its Catchment.

"The EIS covered a section of Swansea Channel from the most eastern point of Salts

Bay to Mats Point, and from Mats Point to the entrance of Black Neds Bay.

The preservation of Salts Bay itself is not the only issue at hand. Salts Bay also protects important wetland areas in Black Neds Bay, which would be at serious risk if the current rate of erosion were to continue unchecked," said Cathy Cole.

It is estimated that some areas would suffer a loss of up to 27 metres of land over a ten year period if the stabilisation works do not go ahead. The project involves a combination of beach nourishment and groyne construction. The initial beach nourishment will be 32,500m³ of sand. This will be supplemented by a progressive extension of the existing groyne and the addition of a further development, included within a Stage 1 budget of \$600,000.

The EIS concluded that while minimal disruptions to recreation and existing land vegetation would occur during the project, the improvement to the general recreational benefits and access to the area would be the lasting result. 📍

Lake Survey Predicts Bright Future

New research has found that local residents are optimistic about the environmental future of Lake Macquarie.

Speaking at the launch of the Living Lake Macquarie Community Survey Report, Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator Jeff Jansson said the majority of people living in the Catchment area believed the health of Lake Macquarie was on the improve.

"The report suggests that the people of Lake Macquarie are quite optimistic about the future of the Lake itself. Results show that the majority of people in the area believe the Lake environment has improved over the last five years. This is a heartening result for the initiatives that have been put in place to solve key issues."

The report was compiled by Precision Research on behalf of the Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator after a month of research.

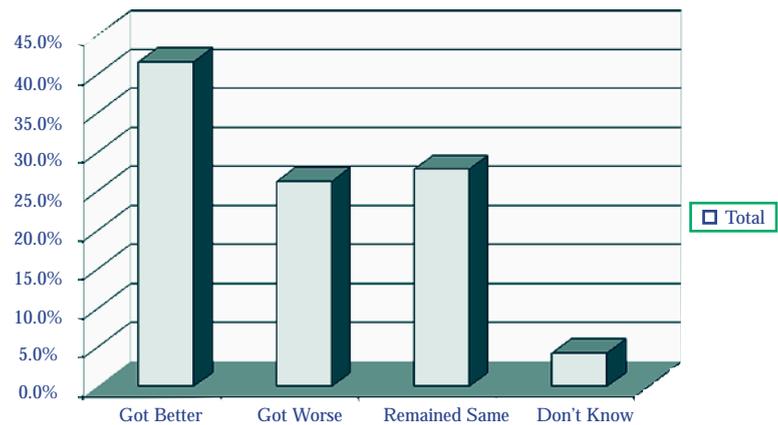
The research project involved a telephone survey of 600 randomly selected respondents

aged 18 years and over within the Lake Macquarie Catchment area. Responses were obtained over a four week period in March and April.

Jeff Jansson said that while the majority of respondents saw a relationship between human activity and the Lake environment, there is still room for improvement in community awareness.

"It is great that most people realise that our actions effect the health of Lake Macquarie, but the 37% who do not acknowledge this fact is a figure which is still too high. We are working at increasing the levels of awareness within the Catchment through targeted Community Education programs." 

The Health of the Lake Over the Past Five Years



Lake Latest

www.livinglakemacquarie.org

Since Living Lake Macquarie was first published in March a range of physical works, scientific studies and monitoring programs have continued on and around the Lake. Here's a snapshot of what is being done for Lake Macquarie:

1. \$395,912 dedicated to erosion and foreshore stabilisation works. Revegetation is one key element of this process and more than

10,000 new plants have been established so far.

2. Development applications for stormwater treatment devices have been submitted to Council. \$500,000 will be spent on improving water quality in this first phase alone.

3. The first phase of maintenance dredging works at 6 locations is now underway, with the work valued at \$77,800.

4. A scientific monitoring program has been established to regularly monitor water quality as well as some biological indicators.

5. Umwelt (Australia) has been engaged to investigate the impacts on seagrasses at Swansea as a result of the dredge spoil islands. Egis Consulting Australia has been appointed to develop planning strategies to protect wetland and foreshore vegetation.

LAKE MACQUARIE PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

NAME	TITLE	ORGANISATION
Mr. Bob Gardiner	Community Representative	Lake Mac. Estuary & Coastal Management Committee
Mr. Doug Sneddon	Regional Director, Hunter & Central Coast Regions	Department of Urban Affairs & Planning
Clr. Greg Piper	Deputy Mayor	Lake Macquarie City Council
Mr. John Fisher	Regional Manager Hunter/Inland	Waterways Authority
Mr. John Diplock	Principal Manager, Recreational Fishing	NSW Fisheries
Mr. Tom Bagnat	Regional Manager, Central Coast Hunter Range	National Parks & Wildlife Service
Mr. George Dodds	Director Northern Regions	Environmental Protection Authority
Mr. Peter Nelson	Community Representative	
Clr. Neil Rose	Councillor	Wyong Shire Council
Mrs. Cathy Cole	Regional Director, Hunter	Department of Land & Water Conservation
Mr. Ian Kiernan		Ex-Officio Member
Mr. Bob Wilson		Ex-Officio Member
Prof. Bruce Thom		Ex-Officio Member

Native Vegetation Is Important To A Healthy Lake

Over 75% of the shoreline has already been cleared in some way, resulting in the removal of native foreshore vegetation and the loss of wetland areas.

This vegetation is very important to the health of Lake Macquarie. There are three main areas where vegetation is vital to the Lake system. On the shoreline of creeks and the Lake, it binds banks and makes them strong to resist erosion. It also filters pollutants from the stormwater.

In drainage lines and wetlands, native vegetation filters pollutants from stormwater and provides oxygen which is important to natural processes.

At sites where erosion is a problem, re-growth of native vegetation helps stabilise land. This prevents the escape of sediments and nutrients from the soil into the stormwater.

We need to resist the desire to conquer nature with hard engineering solutions, like concrete drainage lines. These constructions look neat



Healthy Native Shoreline Vegetation

and tidy, but they increase the velocity at which stormwater enters the Lake. Without native vegetation, sediments and pollutants can enter the Lake virtually unchecked.

Re-vegetation is also very important. There are

around 45 registered Landcare groups in the catchment area, devoted to replanting trees and vegetation in foreshore zones. (For more information, see the article on the Olympic Landcare Challenge on page 2.)

Environmental scientists are now armed with an understanding of the natural processes at work within the catchment. This knowledge has led to the development of a new concept known as Water Sensitive Urban Design. It incorporates the existing environment into new developments, making a feature of them as part of landscaping techniques.

This could be good news for the health of the Lake, as it will lead to less vegetation being cleared in urban, industrial and agricultural areas that are located on or around waterways. 🌱

Clean Up Legend Lends A Hand To Lake Macquarie

A series of Community Service Announcements (CSA) will screen on local television as part of the Living Lake Macquarie Community Education program.



Ian Kiernan, founder and Executive-Chairman of the nation's largest community environmental organisation Clean Up Australia, appears in the series of Community Service Announcements aimed at increasing awareness about the environmental issues confronting Lake Macquarie.

Ian Kiernan is a (ex-officio) member of the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee, established as a result of the Premier's Taskforce Report published in 1999.

"Lake Macquarie is an amazing natural resource which is vital to the economy and

lifestyle of the entire Hunter region. It is sad to see that the Lake's health has suffered because of the imbalances to the ecosystem. It's also true that many of the problems are man-made so we need to inform people about the dangers," said Ian Kiernan.

Chairman of the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee, Mr. Peter Nelson, said Ian Kiernan's association with the project is a huge boost for the efforts being made to inform the local community on ways to protect and renew the Lake.

"Ian is an Australian icon and people immediately link him with great environmental projects like Clean Up Australia. Having Ian on board for our CSA series will help us increase awareness of the issues," Mr. Nelson said.

The Community Service Announcements will screen on Prime and NBN Television and Channel Ten. The series will include treatment of specific issues that have been identified as being crucial to the improvement of the Lake

Local Cinematographer Turns His Hobby Into A Gift To Lake Macquarie

Local cinematographer Keir Enderby spends a lot of his spare time on or near Lake Macquarie and thankfully, he normally has his camera with him.

Enderby, a director and cameraman with NBN Television for over 6 years, donated footage for use in the series of Community Service Announcements to screen on local networks.

"Lake Macquarie is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Over the years I've been lucky enough to capture some of that on film. Its great that the images can now be used to help make people aware of the risks and stress that the Lake is facing," said Keir Enderby.

environment.

"It is great to see that the local media is so supportive of our efforts to revitalise Lake Macquarie", said Peter Nelson. 🌱

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