

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 21, 2010 – RUSHBY CASINO – OLD BAR BEACH

PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your presence and interest in this very worrying problem that we are trying to address. Of course, I sometimes wonder how I got so involved, and it goes back to a very simple telephone conversation with our local Geological Engineer, Tim Minty, who said to me whilst we were discussing the problem “We need a meeting”. Having always worked in the secretarial field I said “Oh, I can do a meeting”!!! Little did I know where that was going to finish up, but once started and having so many people place their faith in our group we have to do our very best.

We have been lucky in that Tim Minty, local geological engineer and Mark Searles, our local surveyor, have been very generous with their time and knowledge. Our committee members, Mark- vice-president, Kerrie Curtis-Secretary, Ann Taylor–treasurer, Beryl Neilsen, Katrina Carlon, Joanne Turner and Bob Galvin, have all also given generously of their time and effort.

We have endeavoured to ascertain what options are available. There is the obvious – a **SEAWALL** or our favoured one of **GROYNES** and another which may be feasible but is long term and more expensive, **OFF-SHORE REEFS**. I will discuss our progress and findings in each of these in detail later.

The Greater Taree City Council has acknowledged our existence by inviting us to join the Estuary and Coastline Management Committee, a meeting of people from many departments and groups interested in the preservation of the coastline. We are using this to the utmost to glean knowledge and to make known our concerns about our disappearing beach.

There is another item in which we are now involved and must use our best endeavours because of the responsibility we have undertaken as committee members of this group, and that is the Worley Parsons study.

WORLEY PARSONS STUDY

Because of delays in receiving reports and studies being completed, this is now being presented in three parts

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- Coastline Hazard Definition Study – Black Head to Crowdy Head – which is now in Volumes 1 and 2, but of which we still only have a preliminary draft.
- Coastline Management Study – of which we still only have a preliminary draft
- Coastline Management Plan – This will be the result of information provided in the above after consideration of submissions received from all members of the Estuary and Coastline Management Committee, DECW, and Council..

Our group has made a 6 page submission of suggestions and these and any others received will be discussed at the next meeting of the ECMC on Thursday, February 25.

This study is being done to comply with the requirements of the State Government for all councils to submit a plan for Coastline Management by the end of June this year.

Mark will be discussing the Worley Parsons study in his address which will follow immediately.

Now – to discuss our findings on beach and foredune protection:

SEAWALLS

These would seem to be the obvious and easiest protection, but an extract from an assessment by Dr.Ian Goodwin, Consulting Coastal Geoscientist, in late 2005, states “Whilst seawalls provide protection of the landward infrastructure, they cause significant loss of beach amenity, and significant ‘endwall’ effects occur. Exacerbated erosion occurs at the end of the walls due to the reflected wave and current energy, combined with the cumulative demand for sand volumes by storm waves/currents, along the length of the wall” That is they have a beginning and an end and that is where exacerbated erosion occurs.

GROYNES

This suggestion firstly came about because of the sand being held by the gabion wall at the entry to Rose Street. Tim Minty, seeing that success, designed the plan which we are now pursuing with Greater Taree City Council – the design encompassing both protection of the foredune and especially the toe of the dune and groynes to hold the sand.

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Our original submission to council for groynes on our beach was prepared by Tim Minty and submitted on January 5, 2009. Then on March 11, 2009, I presented a submission to a meeting of the Council Works Committee with detail and costs of work.

As a result of Paul Hogan's suggestion to public meeting of April 19 (when he said that we had not submitted any plans to council) a full submission with plans, costing and etc. was prepared and delivered to Council but no inclusion at a full council meeting as promised by the Mayor.

This was followed up consistently until a decision was made by the committee of the Old Bar Beach Sand Replenishment Group to have a "Quiet Protest" at the Council Meeting of August 19. At that meeting we presented to the full council a petition with 1300 names on it. That is 1300 people who care about the beach.

As a result Item 7 of the minutes of that meeting stated "the mayor advised that a report will be prepared for a forthcoming Ordinary Meeting of Council".

No report was prepared and we followed up consistently – no report – but

- October 16 – letter from Graham Schultz saying "Following discussions with the General Manager, you are advised that a report to Council concerning the matters raised in your submission will not be prepared until the Coastal Management Plan – currently being prepared by consultants, Worley Parsons, **is adopted by Council**".

How much longer can that take?

Also there is great concern that at a full meeting of councilors – elected in fair democratic fashion – it was minuted that a report would be prepared for a forthcoming meeting of these people elected to represent ratepayers – but this was overruled by a paid employee. Is this not an example of "the tail wagging the dog?" Also does the General Manager have the right to overrule a decision of full council.

I have asked this question several times, but no answer.

Your committee then decided to again do a "Quiet Protest" at the December 6 meeting, but it was cancelled. Our next opportunity was February 18 and we dutifully turned up on Thursday with our placards and sat quietly in the back of the chambers with our message on display. And it is our intention to continue until we are included on the Agenda.

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We are asking for council to consider our plan under the 1997 Coastal Policy the precautionary principle which states "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, **lack of full scientific certainty is not to be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.**"

All approaches either to Federal or State Government Departments refer us back to council as the consenting authority. Therefore we feel that if council would have their engineers look at our plan and submit it to a full council they may find it reasonable to consider. Another obstacle we have found is that we can't get permission from the Department of Lands to have work carried out on their land but if the request came from council permission may be given.

There is so much more, but I have tried to summarise how hard we are trying and the obstacles we encounter. After Mark's address I have a presentation to make on **GROYNES**, a little of their structure and their success stories around Australia.

OFF-SHORE REEFS –

We have been fortunate in being introduced to a company which installs off-shore reefs around the world.

This is a long term solution we are looking into and Dr. Shaw Mead of ASR Ltd. New Zealand is giving his time free to address a meeting here at Old Bar and whilst he is here we hope he will check out our beach.

This meeting will take place on Saturday, March 20, at 2.30 pm. At the Rushby Casino. We are paying his air-fares from OBBSGR funds and Kevin Gallen has kindly offered his beachfront Meridian Resort unit free for accommodation.

As we anticipate there will be a great number of groups wishing to attend, this can be by invitation only, and of course, that will include any financial member of the Old Bar Beach Sand Replenishment Group.

WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY?

Our group regards the problem of our beach as an emergency. However, when asked what council considers an emergency the answer in a letter of January 6 was "Council would consider that if the ocean was within five metres of the building it would be necessary for an order to be issued for the property owner to either move the dwelling or demolish it. As the shoreline is still twenty six metres away from the nearest Meridian Resort building, it is not considered that an emergency situation exists at present".

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That is not an interpretation of emergency – that is telling us what action council will take.

In the year 2009 we lost 12 metres of foredune in front of the Meridian Resort – 10 metres in front of the Littoral Rainforest. There is now only 12 metres of foredune left at the end of Lewis Street preventing the ocean from washing in there.

Your committee considers it an emergency now – I am sure owners of the properties likely to be affected consider it an emergency – and each metre of rainforest lost can never be replaced.

If it is at all possible to save these things, then it is criminal to ignore the possibilities.

We must all make our thoughts known and do our utmost as a community effort to save Old Bar Beach.

Elaine Pearce, President

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