

ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007



Dear members and supporters

AWARDS AND GRANTS

The year was an extremely buoyant one for grants and awards. I think we are entitled to take this as a mark of our Group's growing maturity and its capacity to make a difference in the Shire and be recognised across the Region and the State.

- We continued Stage II of contract and volunteer work on asparagus control in the East Ballina Crown Land heath under the terms of our previously awarded NSW Environmental Trust grant. Final reporting is due in December 2007.
- We were successful in an application under Envirofund Round #8 for weed control and reforestation on the West Shelly Beach wetland. In November 2006 this brought us over \$4000 to cover John Gillett's work near Shelly Beach Road and also some contract work on the Joan James site. The grant continues until 2008.
- We made another application for a Federal Family and Community Services Small Equipment grant, this time for irrigation hose, and were successful.
- We nominated our Group for the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority's Regional Landcare Awards, and received the award "Highly Commended" in the Landcare Community Group section. Lee and Craig subsequently attended the Grafton awards ceremony in March 2007 to receive our framed award (above)

MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT

Association membership over the year remained fairly constant at around 23 paid-up members. Recruitment of new members has nevertheless remained at a very slow rate, barely balancing attrition.

The "East Ballina's Bushland Treasures" brochure has continued to enjoy considerable demand at the Information Centre and Library, and Richmond Landcare Inc. has supported us generously by underwriting its reprinting.

SCHOOLS COLLABORATION

Close collaboration has continued with Southern Cross K-12 School, and during the year over \$300 worth of water testing equipment previously obtained under an Envirofund Grant for the Chickiba Wetland was transferred to the School's Science Department for student use.

The Group supported Ballina High School in its "Lord of the Weeds" project entry by conducting a weed study event for students at the Hindmarsh Street Carpark on Shelly Beach.

RESTORATION SITES

Mercer Park continued to be maintained by Bush Regenerators financed by Council, and Fred Stoker Park has required no work over the period.

Elsewhere a total of 35 volunteer working bees, training events and other activities were held. Restoration work was focussed on the following sites:

- East Ballina Crown Land (Coast Road Firetrail Gate - embankment)
- East Ballina Crown Land (Bellevue Ave Firetrail)
- West Shelly Beach wetland
- Shaws Bay escarpment forest
- Central Avenue forest
- West Hindmarsh Street

Much of our Group's work is done outside rostered working bees, by members working in their own time on sites near where they live, and often goes unrecorded.

Fran Byrne has organised monthly women's working bees at West Hindmarsh Street, while Helen Beattie and others have worked on the Central Avenue Forest. Barbara Sillar has continued working on the Shaws Bay Forest while John Anderberg has pressed on with Asparagus control at that site.

The North Shelly Beach Embankment site has presented many problems due to accelerating weed reinfestation, and Angels Beach Dunecare together with EnviTE's Work for the Dole Team have attempted,

with limited success, to keep it presentable. It will require more decisive action in the near future if it is not to revert to its original catastrophic state.

Preparation of a West Shelly Beach Vegetation Management Plan was begun by Council, through EnviTE as their consultants. The Group made on-site input to that Plan and looks forward to seeing its completion.

VOLUNTEER INPUT

The year's statistics, as supplied to Council for its State of the Environment Report, are:

Volunteer Hours Worked = 240 (under-estimated, since it does not take into account unrecorded private work by member/residents on their nearby "patches")

Trees Planted = 700+
(mostly West Shelly Beach restoration site)

HERITAGE

The year began with the Group presenting an extensive list of nominations to Council's Heritage Study, but nothing has been heard of that matter since.

Late in 2006 we were notified of the first formal steps taken by NSW Lands to have the East Ballina Crown Lands boundaries readjusted to allocate some space for future community land and public recreation (the Old Golf Course site) with the remaining 48ha being dedicated to conservation. Council subsequently approved this plan in principle, though some matters remained to be negotiated.

After consultation with Indigenous Elders at Cabbage Tree Island it was proposed that the future Crown Reserve be named "Allawah Bushland Reserve". We understand that Council have accepted that title.

SOCIAL EVENTS

We hosted our usual highly successful End of Year Party for all Ballina's Coastal Conservationists in November, this time at the Byrne residence – thanks to Fran and Ian for their excellent hospitality.

In April 2007 a good number of members joined the Beach to Bush Bus Tour organised by Richmond Landcare Services. The event was very enjoyable and provided an eye-opener into restoration projects underway through the efforts of our colleagues working on the plateau and beyond. Thanks to RLS for this initiative, which was greatly appreciated.

TRAINING

Neil Denison, Kathy Brady and Lee Andresen were sponsored by Council to attend EnviTE's basic training/upgrade for the Chemicals Application Ticket.

Lee attended a Richmond Landcare Services sponsored Grasses Identification Workshop at Wadeville in November 2006.

There has nevertheless been a dearth of grassroots training opportunities situated locally and accessible to our members during this past year. We hope this will be rectified soon.

SHIRE AND CATCHMENT

Your President continued to represent the Association on the Executive Committee of Richmond Landcare Incorporated, the catchment's umbrella not-for-profit landcare group. RLI's ongoing support, both moral and practical, has been greatly valued.

The Association nominated Neil Denison to sit on Council's Coastline Management Study Reference Group, and we are grateful to Neil for his contribution to this project.

In December 2006 the Group hosted a morning visit from Nicole Strehling, the CMA's recently appointed Coastal Officer. Nicole was shown all work-sites and we had valuable discussion of support issues over morning tea.

The Group has continued in a productive partnership with Ballina Shire Council, participating regularly in Council's Coastal Groups Advisory Committee. We are particularly grateful for the support and advice rendered by its Open Spaces and Reserves section through James Brideson, and for Council's continued coverage of the group's insurance costs.

We have again enjoyed excellent backup from Environmental Training and Employment (EnviTE) and are deeply grateful for personal support and advice from Andy Erskine and the outstanding EnviTE staff.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

In March 2007 we joined other East Ballina residents in a Clean Up Australia event, removing rubbish from Links Avenue in front of Southern Cross K-12 School and in the School's driveway and wetland margins.

During early 2007 negotiations began with Council to enable some form of permanent recognition to be given to those Suvla Street residents (notably Joan James and her husband) who had initiated the conservation of the adjacent wetland forest.

FAREWELL

By the time of this Annual General Meeting, Helen Beattie who was one of our founding members and Vice President until 2006 will have left the district and settled nearer to her family in Victoria.

Helen has almost single-handedly "steered" and otherwise managed the long process of getting the East Ballina Crown Land conserved as a Crown Reserve. It has not been easy, and the credit for bringing the whole project to completion is almost entirely due to Helen's dogged persistence.

We wish Helen and Bill a happy future in their new home and hope that they will not neglect to re-visit East Ballina whenever they are able to do so in the future. You will be sorely missed.

In conclusion I wish to thank all members for their unstinting commitment, devoted work and genuine friendship. We are a very fortunate group which can look forward to a bright future of service to East Ballina's natural environment.

Lee Andresen
Hon. President
9th October 2007