



grants a success!

ROMAINE RUTNAM

There are many of your Avoca bushcarers heaving huge sighs of relief as we come to the end of May this year! As I write, I am finalising our reports to the two granting bodies: the federal government for its Envirofund grant under the Natural Heritage Trust, and Gosford City Council for its Community Development Grant.



Envirofund grant

I have to say the process of applying for the Envirofund grant Round Two during 2003-4 and accounting for it during 2004-05 turned out to be an unpleasant surprise. I had handled many a grant application and report in my voluntary work in the past, but the extent of work involved in developing the very complex 15-page application (with attachments) was enormous.

Our Bushcare group's feelings of success in winning the grant were also muted after we learned we were granted only half of what we had asked for, and then were sent a 50-page Monitoring and Evaluation Package to digest and implement before we could start our work. By then I wished the grant had been cut a further \$251, so that it would have been just under \$5000 and we would not have needed to have (and pay for at our additional expense) an audit undertaken.

The old bureaucrat in me led me to suggest changes to the evaluation and monitoring process, with the support of our Gosford City Council and DIPNR advisers. I was pleased to learn that some of those changes have been adopted for the most recent round of Envirofund grants. Bushcarer Bill also submitted a protest to Minister Jim Lloyd about our having to pay GST out of the grant money, thus leading to a reduction in hours that our contractors could spend on the ground.

The contractors spread their 159 hours of work over 5 days in July, September, November, January and March. This was done to maximise the stabilisation of the steep creek bank areas which they weeded on behalf of the volunteers. As an additional benefit of the grant, three more species have been added to the species list developed for the 1999 Bulbararing Reserve Bush Regeneration Management Plan. Overall, your 6 original bushcare volunteers, with the help of 6 more new ones, contributed 204 hours, valued at \$4080 to this project.



September 04



March 05 – regeneration around fallen tree on creek bank



president's message

IAN ESPLIN

In writing this message I usually try to think of positive things to say about what's going on in Avoca Beach and elsewhere, and encourage people to get involved in community activities. I don't like being negative but this time the task is harder than usual. There seems to be an excess of bad news over good news.

At a local level there is the Council restructure which has eliminated the Environment Directorate and combined its functions with the Development section. There is an obvious conflict of interest in this arrangement which was highlighted by an independent management audit only three years ago after which the separate Environment Department was established.

The theory is that environmental awareness is now spread throughout all areas of the organisation and therefore a separate department is no longer needed. A number of current and past councillors have expressed their disagreement with this decision and it certainly seems likely that the environmental function will be at least diluted in this process. It appears like "re-arranging the deck chairs" instead of giving the new system a reasonable go.

At the state level the news is equally disturbing. The wholesale planning changes which will affect everyone are yet to take effect, but on another level there are sweeping changes afoot which effectively limit debate and expert environmental input on major development projects. The aim of this move is stated as allowing business to "work with certainty, a minimum of risk, low transaction costs and appropriate levels of regulation" according to Minister Craig Knowles.

Whilst these are obviously worthy objectives the problem is that unfortunately the state government has frequently not shown any greater skill in managing development and environment than local authorities. There is an argument to keep some level of control localised.

At our own micro level of Avoca Beach the one piece of good news is that the two government-funded Bushcare projects reached successful conclusions (see articles on pages 1 and 3).

The cycleway project mentioned some time ago has not really got off the ground yet. The ABCA is co-operating with the Chamber of Commerce to see if we can raise the political profile

of the project by organising a questionnaire of residents (including those in areas such as Kincumber) to gauge community need and use it as a lobbying tool. Please get in touch with me or Ken West if you have ideas to contribute, or wish to join our working party on this project.

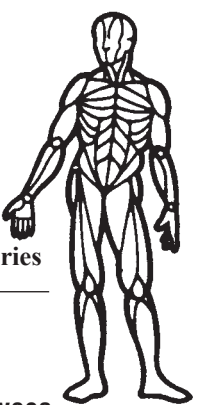
The re-zoning proposal for the theatre site is now on public display and we have included an article in this edition with some background information to assist the community to have an input on this important development. In a way there is a connection between this issue and the planning changes mentioned previously. Much debate about development projects is reduced to simplistic "either you are for it or against it" type of arguments.

The Association's Committee want to see the cinema function maintained in its current location and would support a proposal for a limited mixed-use commercial/residential re-zoning if it could be demonstrated that it was viable and fitted in with the surrounding environment. The onus is on any applicant who proposes a project that goes beyond the current planning guidelines (as this one does) to demonstrate that there are convincing arguments for it.

A re-zoning is a change in the planning law which is basically put in place indefinitely and one has to be very sure that all available options have been considered before making such a change. We feel that there are other options which have not been explored which could lead to a better result for the overall community. This however is now hypothetical because what will ultimately be debated will probably be some version of the current plan. I encourage you to take an interest in this issue and if possible put your thoughts into a letter to the council before the cut off date of 10 July.

Finally, I'd like to mention that nominations for positions on the Committee for next year are now open. I recommend anyone who has an interest the local community and environment to get involved. It's interesting to get to know what's going on and rewarding to be able to have some influence, however slight, in shaping the future of this beautiful place that we live in.

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Grants a Success! (continued from page 1)

The good neighbours of Bulbararing Reserve: Community Development grant.

From my perspective as project manager, the \$2000 we won from Council gave our group much more fun and many more benefits, with far fewer worries. These are the outcomes included in our final report.

- Neighbours' awareness and interest significantly increased through reports in Association's quarterly newsletters in September and December 2004 and March 2005.



(L-R) Vanessa and Richard Amdell, Peter and Carol Gumley, Eve Mahon, Kathleen and Mick O'Brien (grandparents of winner Stevie)

- 2 surveys of neighbours undertaken, in Sep 04 and May 05. The evaluation showed that all respondents had heard or read about the project bar one; there had been a significant increase in knowledge and use of the reserve; there was a response from one street not previously interested; and all respondents said they would use the winning sticker on their green bins.
- Information pamphlet on the Reserve produced and distributed to 1700 households.
- Education of 180 Avoca Beach Public School children and 4 school teachers.
- All 4 Real Estate Agencies were visited. They agreed to hand out the Bulbararing Reserve pamphlet and a fine new brochure on Avoca Beach's natural values produced by Community Environment Network to new property buyers and tenants in future.
- 100% increase in volunteers for the Bulbararing Reserve Bushcare Group by May 2005.
- 4 new volunteers attended Council's "Introduction to Bushcare" workshops in 04-05.

- Open Day/barbeque function well attended, by 22 people who had not visited the site before. They included 18 of the immediate neighbours of the reserve.

- 80 Green bin stickers were produced and distributed to neighbouring households.

- A poster demonstrating outcomes of project produced for future portable permanent display (will be on show at our AGM on 4 July).



Gareth Munton, overall winner, with his prize-winning design.

- Final celebration and prize giving to schoolchildren attended by 37 people, with many apologies received in advance.



(L-R) Front row - the winners: Alice Taylor, Stevie McCarthy, Gareth Munton and Rohan Howitt Back row: Jane Smith (CEN), Teena Pennington (GCC), Patrick Gatland (AB Public School), Geoff Bakewell (GCC)

I couldn't resist adding the comment that "The volunteers found it extremely disappointing that none of the elected Councillors could be present at our final celebration of the excellent (and cost-effective considering Council's input of \$2000, against nearly 180 volunteer hours from us) outcomes from this project", despite early negotiation of the date in November last year.

The Association has just received an invitation from Keep Australia Beautiful to the launch of its new 2005 Sustainable Cities Awards Program. I hope the June meeting, and all readers, will support my suggestion that we nominate this grant for its new Environmental Education Award.

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theatre site rezoning – have yo

(Ed. Note. This issue has already received a lot of media coverage however the ABCA Committee is aware that there is some confusion. The proponents were invited to contribute their own article however they declined. We hope readers will think about the pros and cons)

1. What is a Draft Local Environmental Plan (LEP)?

A Local Environmental Plan is required where it is proposed to do something which would not normally be allowed under the current zoning. A person can apply to the Council for a new LEP or a change to an existing LEP and must support this with a study. If the Council decides to proceed (as it has done in this case) it is required to publicly display the proposed changes in the form of a draft and call for submissions from the public. It then considers these submissions and ultimately decides whether to proceed and what the final form of the LEP will be. The LEP must then be approved by the State government planning authority (DIPNR).

It is important to understand that the current proposal is not a Development Application (DA) which could only come after the LEP was finally approved. It is the DA which will determine the actual form of the eventual structures built, and this will also have to be publicly exhibited and commented on before it is approved by Council.

It is also important to remember that LEPs can only allow something to happen rather than ensure that it happens. The approval of the LEP does not guarantee that a building in the form currently proposed will eventuate.

2. Why is a rezoning necessary?

The current zoning is 2(f) "Residential (Beach frontage)". This zoning was created to ensure low-key development in areas in the immediate vicinity of the coastline. It imposes height restrictions and restrictions of usage which limit buildings generally to single dwellings unless "existing use rights" can be established where a land use already in existence is allowed to continue. Thus currently on the theatre site a single dwelling or new theatre could be built, and on the adjoining block a single dwelling only could be built.

The zonings in the surrounding areas are generally residential 2(a), (b) or (f) with exception of the "Feast" site which has a commercial 3a zoning. There was an attempt to rezone the block adjoining the theatre to 3(a) which was unsuccessful and it is generally agreed that such a rezoning is not likely.

The applicant has proposed what is called a "site specific enabling clause" be added to the current zoning of the properties to allow "places of assembly (3 indoor cinemas and an outdoor cinema), a restaurant, gallery space and 5 dwellings and the subdivision thereof". In addition the overall volume of space (building envelope) and maximum floor area are specified in the draft LEP as is the retention of the existing cinema building.

There is an existing LEP which was passed to allow the operation of the Alfresco (outdoor) cinema which would be redundant if the new LEP was passed and so in the new plan the old LEP is deleted.

3. Does the theatre have a heritage listing and what does this mean?

The old theatre building is included on the National Trust Register but is not on the Council's Register of Heritage items. It was nominated for this some years ago but it did not proceed. The National Trust listing has only advisory power whereas the Council listing would require preservation of the building as well as strict controls for alteration or extension.

The National Trust has said that the building has significance as a reminder of a way of life more than as an intrinsically important piece of architecture. The Council also nominates buildings as having "local significance" and this is the category under which the building would have been put.

4. What are the arguments in favour of the proposal?

(Ed. These comments are summarised from the draft LEP report to Council 14-12-04. Further information is available in the documents on display at the theatre and Council offices)

The proponents argue that the rezoning will allow for the construction of new facilities appropriate for the future as well as retaining the old cinema. It is suggested that allowing the construction and sale of five residential units would raise the funds necessary to construct the additional two cinemas, restaurant and gallery in an amalgamated building with the old cinema structure which were argued would be beneficial to Avoca Beach.

The height, site coverage and bulk of the building has been justified by the proponents on the basis that such a size is necessary for economic viability, and that the impact of such building volume is reduced since the site is surrounded either by parkland or roads and thus does not dominate adjacent buildings. The building envelope is also stepped back at the upper level to reduce the visual impact of the structure.

The limited car parking spaces are justified on the basis that cinema usage predominantly occurs at night when there is minimal usage of the existing public car parking area.

5. What are the arguments against the proposal?

(Ed. These comments don't necessarily reflect the views of the ABCA committee but are summaries of some of the objections that have been put forward in the community.)

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our say!

...n regarding aspects of the proposal. This article has been put together by the Committee in an attempt to clear up this confusion. ...s and put in their own submissions to the Council. The diagrams and quotations in italics are from the LEP documents available on the Council web-site.)

A major argument against the proposal is that it allows a much larger volume of building than is allowed on adjoining properties with a 2b (residential flat) zoning. The Floor Space Ratio (which measures the total building area relative to site area) is nearly double at 1.1:1 compared to 0.6:1 for 2b. The building "footprint" also covers the majority of the site – well above the 60% for 2b. The height at a maximum of four storeys also exceeds most adjoining properties which have height limits of two storeys above the natural ground line. The setbacks to boundaries are also less than normal with a large portion of the building having a "zero setback". There is also a concern that if this building envelope becomes law, it could be a precedent for future rezonings along the beachfront.

Other objections concern the provision of three cinemas. People have suggested that a single extra screen would be more suitable for the "art-house" style of programming that is seen as appropriate in this location. The argument that a three cinema complex is required to create economic viability is also rejected.

It has also been suggested that the outdoor "alfresco" cinema is not practical in the small space left over, and that it is also not compatible with the other proposed facilities such as the restaurant.

The National Trust has objected to the proposal on the basis that it "overwhelms the existing building". Conventional heritage concepts require a clear demarcation between old and new buildings, which they say does not occur with this proposal. A preferable alternative, that the second cinema, gallery and café could be provided to the north and east of the existing cinema, separated by an atrium courtyard, has been suggested in order to comply with this heritage concept.

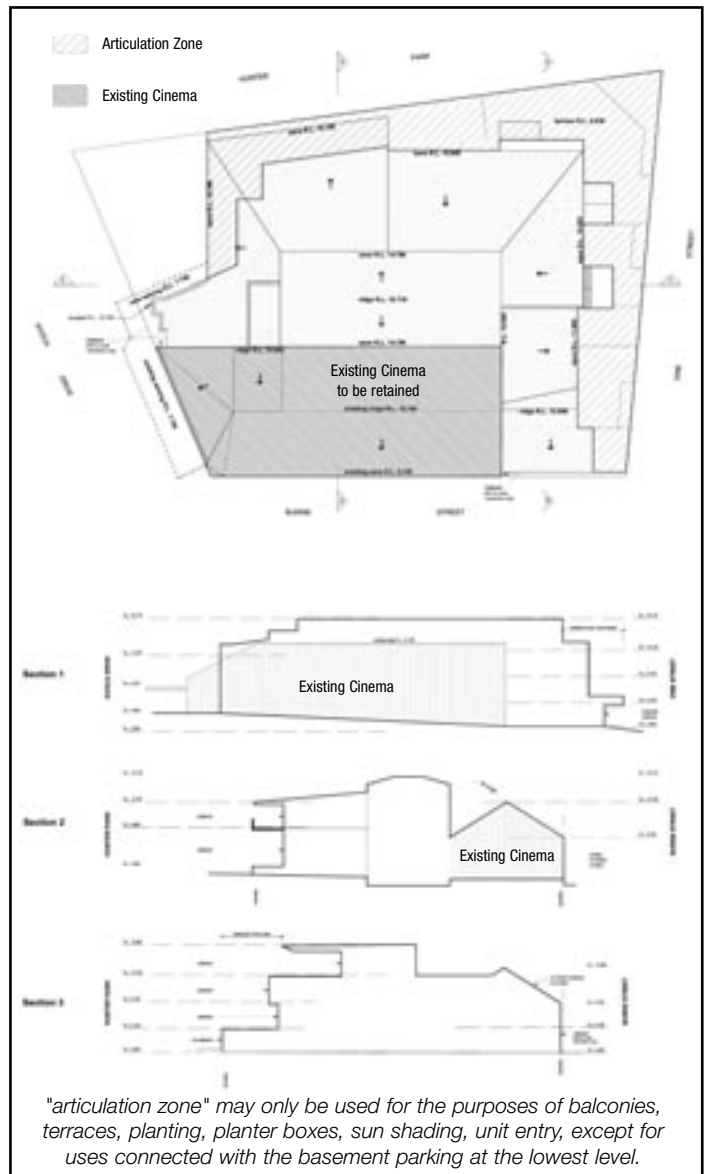
Other objectors have argued that the option of demolishing the existing building should be considered given that they find it currently unpleasantly mouldy/damp, out-dated, and unattractive from the Burns and Vine St. elevations. They have suggested it may be simpler and more cost-effective for the proponents if it were replaced by a more compact and stunningly designed contemporary building, which could be up and running far more quickly than the present proposal.

The shortfall in car parking spaces is considered likely to generate excessive extra demand for existing public car parking spaces.

What can I do if I want to have a say?

The full set of documents is on display in the theatre as well as at the Council offices in Gosford and Erina. The basic planning

documents are available to read on or download from the council web-site www.gosford.nsw.gov.au. Submissions should be addressed to The General Manager, Gosford City Council, PO Box 21 Gosford, NSW 2250 and refer to RA – 2003-18. Positive submissions as well as objections are equally acceptable. They must be in by 10 July.



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crime prevention and reporting

Editor's note: This is an edited version of a talk given by Senior Constable Jo Plummer when she addressed the Association's April 2005 meeting. Double the usual number of members present thanked her enthusiastically for her tips and advice, and wish to publicly congratulate her and her staff for the excellent low level of local crime statistics publicised in the mass media shortly after that meeting.

Senior Constable Jo Plummer is the Crime Prevention Officer for Brisbane Water Local Area Command (LAC). She is celebrating 20 years in policing, across many very busy commands. This Command covers 1020km, with a huge staff. Her task is to identify the extent of crime, and to implement strategies to prevent it. One of the hardest crimes to deal with is malicious damage, particularly associated with underage drinking. Her role is not only to work with the police but with other agencies, such as Health, Premiers', Gosford City Council.

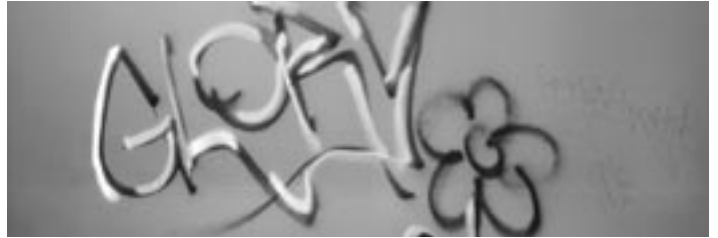
One of the LAC's biggest successes has been with their Scene of Crime Officers, who identify offenders through DNA and fingerprints. A very small minority of people commit the majority of offences. The LAC is now recognising High Risk Offenders and targeting them. That has helped to reduce the level of crime, which is now the lowest it's been. Perhaps the LAC's biggest challenge is perceived slow response time, but they do have to prioritise responses.

Crime prevention strategies are very basic, and involve each person developing an awareness of their surroundings. A number of break and enters are through open doors or windows. The community has to remember that offenders take note of what we are doing, so we have to keep aware, and make it as difficult as possible for people to enter our homes. If you are outside your home, make sure you keep the back and front doors locked. When you are away from home for a while, simple steps are to leave the radio on, or use a cheap timer to turn on lights in the evenings, and let your neighbours know you are away.

Identity fraud is a growing problem. When throwing out papers in recycling bins, tear off your name and address from the rest of the letters.

It is very important that the community report all crime to the local police. In emergencies, dial 000. For all other crime, call the Police Assistance Line 131 444. In answer to a question about ways the community can prevent vandalism and graffiti, Senior

Constable Plummer's response was that it is best to photograph it and report it. There is quite a lot of success in tracking this. Rapid removal also tends to work, especially with trains. Reporting is really important, she emphasised.



SOS saving our (local) stores

by Sandy West

We are a fortunate lot who live in Avoca Beach, not simply because of the beautiful area or the wonderful lifestyle, but also because we are very spoiled when it comes to the suppliers. We have our local businesses who make our lives easier. How easy is it, when we receive a phone call from friends to say they are on the F3 and "thought they would call in, about midday, if that would be okay?" The pantry is empty and the fridge is bare, oh what to do. We have not one but three general stores servicing our needs. We have a butcher, we have, not one, but two bakers. We even have a chemist, for the after effects of that great lunch!

Avoca beach is really quite unique in having all the facilities we do. We have a liquor outlet in the village which has a reputation for stocking some of the best wines one could want, and a pub with a most convivial atmosphere and great dining, a selection of restaurants ranging from casual to one of the best on the coast. We even have hairdressers and beauty salons to make you look glamorous before the guests arrive or you dine out. Last minute birthday or anniversary or garden essentials? We even have businesses which can supply those needs! Our newsagent can help with the cards to go with the gifts and keeps us up to date with all latest magazines and papers.

Before visitors arrive (especially unexpected ones) there are always a million last minute jobs to be done. We have a hardware store in our village which supplies almost everything a handyman (or woman) could need, not only for those little jobs, but for the construction industry as well.

The facts of modern life are this: if you don't use it, you lose it, and this applies to our local businesses too. Remember, they are there for our convenience. If we don't support them, we will lose them. Let us start a campaign to support our local businesses.

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Notices of Motion –

Bill Robertson, Public Officer

At the AGM on 4 July I intend to move the following special resolution.

That the RULES of the Association be amended as follows:

1. Item 25. GENERAL MEETINGS. Clause (1). After the words "The meeting will be held in the CWA Rooms at Avoca Beach on the first Monday of each month except January" Add the words "OR, If the committee thinks fit, on the first Monday of each SECOND month, commencing in February of each year, ie, in February, April, June, August, October and December of each year, at 7.30pm unless..."

2. Item 13. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE. Clause (3). Remove the words "unless excluded from eligibility by the provisions of clause 5. Delete clause 5 entirely. (Clause 5 currently reads "A member may hold office for a maximum of three (3) consecutive years only in the same office, and shall not be eligible to hold that office again until the following annual general meeting.)



Avoca Beach Community Association Inc.

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ABCA meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month in the CWA Hall (next to the Bowtells Garage).

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V/President:	Ron Leckie	4382 2411
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