

Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare News 27.5.2013



A spur of the moment decision saw about 20 Coastcarers put up their hands at 48 hours notice to bed another 500 plants along the fore-dune of the Melaleuca wetlands last week. As if perfectly planned a couple of days of light showers followed.

Many thanks to those who rallied at such short notice and also those keen beach-planters – members of the “CERT” team who jumped in after the high tides and strong sou-westerlies to rescue plantings on the Outriggers Beach. (CERT – Coastcare Emergency Response Team!)

While recognising the shoreline is a dynamic environment we’re all looking forward to a few quieter winter moments watching the sand accrete!



Plantings to date 5,100 with just another 30 metres left to re-vegetate

Why we need a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan

Hopefully, the legacy of Professor Rodger Tomlinson's visit to inspect beach erosion and address a public meeting last month will see Redland City Council soon announce a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan to encompass the whole of Coochiemudlo Island - not just the eastern beaches.

Professor Tomlinson, who is Director of the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management and Professor of Coastal Management for the Gold Coast City Council was joined on the day by Member for Redlands, Peter Dowling MP, Councillors Lance Hewlett and Wendy Boglary as well as RCC General Manager Infrastructure and Operations, Gary Soutar and Manager City Spaces, Lex Smith

Joel Bolzenius from SEQ Catchments also discussed why his organisation targeted the Island for urgent restorative action after the January storm surge. For those who missed the presentation we've recorded a DVD (thanks to Ian Rowland's assistance) with more detail and it's available to borrow.

Summarising the afternoon is a challenge as there were so many highlights and new information to share. After Coastcare President Carolyn Brammer welcomed attendees Councillor Lance Hewlett chaired proceedings.

Coochiemudlo Island's vulnerability was central to Professor Tomlinson's presentation as he outlined the importance of determining threats to retain a stable shoreline.

He said there was a need to understand what was happening with erosion if we wanted to ensure a coastal lifestyle. The critical element was to deal with the problem. He cited examples of Shoreline Erosion Management Plans in Redcliffe, the Fraser Coast, Hervey Bay, Townsville and Woorim Beach which provide comparable situations to Coochiemudlo Island.

Unlike the Gold Coast which has high energy beaches there is no guarantee here that sand will come back because of loss into deeper channels. He described Coochiemudlo Island as "a very sensitive environment", being in a flood tidal delta with most of the action surrounding us determined by the activity at entrances.

Coastal Hazard Zone

It's also sobering to realise that the entire island foreshore is mapped as Coastal Hazard Zone. Professor Tomlinson said while a SEMP would deal with the situation today and 30 years hence there needed to be consideration of hazard adaption 100 years on that included extreme events such as January's storm surge, climate variability and climate change.

The approach is to be risk averse – to identify high risk areas, prepare risk assessment and mitigation. Professor Tomlinson cautioned if the storm surge experienced in January was to become a regular occurrence it would require very different management. Describing the storm surge from ex-Tropical cyclone Oswald as "pretty dynamic" with a surge one metre higher than expected on a storm tide of 1.8 metres Professor Tomlinson challenged attendees to regard the water level on January 26th "as the way we need to start thinking of the risks of the future"

The importance of vegetation to build a dune system was stressed. "If you don't have a dune, you don't have a buffer'. Professor Tomlinson said as he went on to explain vegetation is an "absolute must to enhance the rehabilitation system"

The common themes of SEMPS included “do nothing, seawalls, groynes, beach nourishment (without monitoring a waste of time) and planning controls.

There was discussion about ways to arrest the flow of sand from the eastern beaches and also placement of submerged geo-textile structures offshore that “ would work” Professor Tomlinson sounded a warning that if you start modifying channels by dredging it requires site-specific investigation to determine the consequences

As a representative from the Golf Club raised a query, Professor Tomlinson agreed a SEMP had to understand the full picture therefore a whole of island approach was needed.

SEQ Catchments to the rescue

Joel Bolzenius SEQ Catchments Community Partnerships Manager for Redlands, Moreton Bay and Islands explained why Coochiemudlo Island attracted the organisation’s support to fund beach restoration. He described SEQ Catchments as the peak natural resource management (NRM) body in south-east Queensland, established by the Howard Government following the sale of Telstra. Funds were dispersed via the Heritage Trust to support NRMs work with local communities.

SEQ Catchments has 120 not-for-profit organisations like Coochiemudlo Coastcare as members as well as 12 Councils. An elected Board determines how funds are to be spent. Last year SEQ Catchments spent over \$12 million on projects to protect the environment.

Joel stressed the storm surge had been an extraordinary event. With the loss of fore-dune, particularly in front of the Melaleuca Wetlands and concern about die-back of vegetation there was the short-term risk this would destabilise the vegetated buffer. It was decided to take action to maintain the security of the beach, wetland and Emerald Fringe.

Joel told the audience that a key decision-making factor in the funding was that the Melaleuca Wetlands are recognised as a wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. (Australia is one of 167 signatories to this agreement) Moreton Bay is one of the five sites in Queensland and a polygon drawn over Coochiemudlo’s Melaleuca Wetlands has it identified as one of the few freshwater wetlands in the Bay – a site of international significance

Joel spoke about the supportive relationship with Redland City Council and Lex Smith and their commitment to resource the project with geo-textile walkways

What’s planned for Norfolk Beach?

Ever since Council extended the “temporary” bollards along the Norfolk Beach track, Coastcare executive members have been questioned over the organisation’s stance on the issue.

Our response is that all we seek is best management practice for this vulnerable and erosion-prone corner of the island. That translates to preservation of the Emerald Fringe and foreshore for future generations.

We recognise the need to bolster this vegetated buffer to ensure today’s population is better protected against extreme weather events - like the storm surge experienced in January. How that is best achieved we leave to the experts and the recommendations to flow from a soon-to-be-announced Shoreline Erosion Management Plan.

Our stance is enshrined in the first objective of the Coochiemudlo Island Coastcare Constitution –

1. To value, protect and enhance the natural island environment, particularly coastal and marine areas and promote best management practice

Coastcare understands that while Local Government is the area where most detailed land use planning occurs, this level of Government does not have the power to enact law. When it comes to the Coastal zone in the 21st century there are layers of legislation to be adhered to.

In an effort to unravel some of the detail we've sent Councillor Lance Hewlett a list of questions and are awaiting an official response which we'll on-forward to members as soon as possible.

While we all harbour personal thoughts on whether the track should be permanently opened or closed to vehicular traffic there is no denying any decision has to be made for the greater good of the island.

Coastcare made no secret of the fact in a previous newsletter that while members worked on beach restoration we also lobbied to have access restored for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters pre-Easter while Council investigated long-term action. We advocated strongly for the removal of ambiguous signage which for weeks indicated the track was dangerous and closed.

There's no doubt communication with Council could have been better and the manner in which the closure was extended caused unnecessary angst for some. The announcement of the track being an ungazetted road has added yet another layer of complexity.

We'll keep you posted with answers to the following questions sent to Cr Hewlett

1) *Can you please list the differing legislation that governs Redland City Council's management of Norfolk Beach and the conservation foreshore islanders know as the Emerald Fringe?*

2) *Has the complexity of regulation increased since the 2004 Land Management Plan? If so, which areas in particular?*

3) *Can this legislative responsibility be illustrated in a diagram similar to that in the LMP - **Figure 1 Land Management Responsibilities - 8.2** so folk better understand the decision-making process?*

http://web01.redland.qld.gov.au/robo/plans/Coochiemudlo_LMP/Coochiemudlo_LMP_final_Dale-dan_03-04.htm#10_5_6_Specific

4) *What impact has the storm surge damage had on Council decision-making regarding restoration of the south-east corner?*

5) *Can you please provide an update on the proposed Shoreline Erosion Management Plan for Coochiemudlo Island?*

FIELD TRIP ACROSS MORETON BAY_ - First stop Coochiemudlo Island - 7th May



Tuesday 7th May saw 15 Bushcare and Coastcare members from Coochiemudlo Island, including Councillor Lance Hewlett, join other Bay Island groups, visiting beach and bush restoration projects on various sites on the Bay islands. We were led on this Field Trip by Joel Bolzenius from SEQ Catchments who informed us of the activities undertaken by groups at each site to protect and restore each unique environment.

On that beautiful sunny morning the Kittykat arrived with members of the other islands groups. After a short stroll we welcomed them on Norfolk Beach where they were told the story of the destruction caused by ex cyclone Oswald. With much pride they were shown the subsequent restoration and revegetation.

Our next destination was Cow Bay on Maclay Island. It was inspiring to hear of the work being done by the Cow Bay Bushcare Group looking after one of only two sites of littoral rainforest in South East Queensland. Then on to Russell Island where we walked to a site bordering a watercourse which had previously been slashed by the council. This site has been restored and revegetated by the local community and Bushcare Group and after a lot of hard work is now back to its natural habitat protecting fauna and flora.

Another cruise across the bay to Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island to the Little Ship's Club for lunch before driving by bus to Myora Springs. This second site of littoral rainforest with its spring flowing into the bay has been heavily impacted by visiting groups due to its natural beauty and aboriginal historical significance. This impact is now being managed by contractors who are placing geo-fabric bags, fortifying the creek edges. Viewing platforms are also under construction to reduce the impact from visitors. We were addressed by a local aboriginal elder who explained the need for protecting the area, which contains a shell midden, and to encourage healthy mangrove growth.

The bus then took us to Point Lookout where the convenor of the local Bushcare Group showed us some of their previous restoration work before taking us to their beautiful and well run native plant nursery. A short walk down to South Gorge revealed their latest project, a complete dune restoration after clearing the area of Singapore Daisy, a rampant environmental weed. The dunes were successfully revegetated with spinifex, beach beans, coastal banksias and casuarinas to name just a few. An inspiration to us all.

So many wonderful success stories, so many friendships made or renewed! It is heartening to see how much can be achieved by supporting passionate and dedicated groups and communities.

Thank you SEQ Catchments and Redland City Council for your commitment to the environment and a big THANK YOU from us all for a wonderful day. **Margrit Lack**



Kerry Scobbie, Annie Jamieson and Jacqui Cresswell on the Moreton Bay Field Trip

LATEST NEWS: Coochiemudlo Coastcare last week received a \$10,000 Conservation Grant from Redland City Council to complete restoration works in front of the Melaleuca Wetlands with low visual impact fencing, signage, back-up plantings as well as dune-care and beach-monitoring workshops. Grateful thanks to all involved!

DATE CLAIMERS: Tuesday June 4th at 6.30pm at the Rec Club, Redlands City Council is holding an information session regarding the Norfolk track closure. Cr Lance Hewlett and RCC Manager of City Spaces, Lex Smith will be in attendance.

Coastcare's next open meeting will be held on Saturday, July 20 at the Community Hall starting at 2pm with a special presentation on a matter of island importance – yet to be finalised.