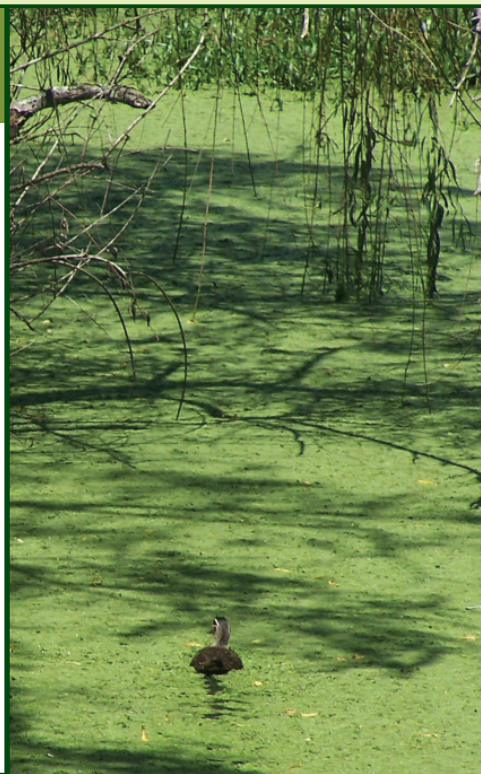


# ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY

Council has an obligation to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of its area in a manner which is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Council has developed an Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Strategy in conjunction with the community and is implementing the action plans identified. The resources required to implement the strategy are extensive and the rate pegging policy of the State Government does not allow Council to completely fund its programs from General Rates without severely decreasing levels of service in other areas.

In 2003 Council applied to the Department of Local Government and was granted a Special Rate increase for a five (5) year period to carry out environmental works and was invited to re-apply for an extension of the Levy in 2008. The Levy was a fixed amount per assessment of \$28.00 which has been increased by \$1 each subsequent year and is \$32 for the 2007/08 year. Council believes that environmental protection is the equal responsibility of all and should not be related to the value of property. Each year a report on programs funded by the Levy is included in the Management Plan and the State of the Environment Report.



## Programs financed from the Levy from July 2003 – June 2007

### **Pola Creek Rehabilitation Program - \$18,843**

The system has been retrofitted to accommodate active management of the floodgate structure that now allows for fish passage into Pola Creek and has addressed water quality issues emanating from the creek. A riverbank revegetation program has also been completed along selected banks of Pola Creek.

### **Killick Creek and Saltwater Creek - \$31,103**

Consultants were engaged to undertake an Estuary Management Study and develop an Estuary Plan for both creeks. These plans will provide the basis for sustainable management of both creeks.

### **Macleay River Floodplain Project - \$25,196**

A number of environmental rehabilitation activities have been successfully completed via the Macleay River Floodplain Project. These include Raffetys Drainage Rehabilitation Program, Ptolemys Acid Sulphate Soils Scald Rehabilitation Project and the Sillitoe Drain Wet Pasture Management Project.

### **Beachwatch - \$85,188**

Water sampling is undertaken at Killick Beach and Killick Creek at Crescent Head; Horseshoe Bay, Trial Bay, Saltwater Creek and Main Beach at South West Rocks; Hat Head Beach and Korogoro Creek at Hat Head; and Grassy Head and Stuarts Point Beaches. The results are forwarded to the Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Council Thompson Street Depot - \$237,821**

A number of environmental issues relating to the management of waste and its potential to discharge from Council's Thompson Street Kempsey Depot were identified by the Environmental Protection Authority. Works undertaken to address EPA compliance requirements included the construction of new storage compounds, the installation of a new waste oil disposal unit, an upgrade of the vehicle wash down facility, an undercover vehicle parking area and the upgrade of oil and chemical storage facilities. These measures resulted in a reduction in pollution entering the adjoining watercourse.

### **Kempsey Waste Reveal and Disposal Facility Upgrade - \$619,583**

The upgrade has included the capping and closure of used tip areas, the construction of new waste cells the construction of site water management system including leachate and stormwater retention ponds to ensure adjacent land and watercourses are not contaminated.

### **Swimming Pools EPA Works - \$240,000**

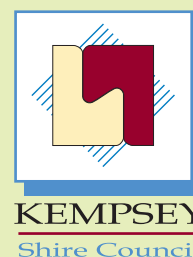
The Environmental Protection Authority required backwash water disposal systems to be installed at the pools at Kempsey, Crescent Head, South West Rocks and Gladstone to ensure sustainable and environmentally safe disposal of waste water. Previously water from the community pools was discharged into the stormwater system. The installation of the backwash system ensures this water is now treated and disposed of via the sewerage treatment system.

### **Saleyards EPA Works - \$400,000**

Effluent treatment and disposal system has been upgraded to prevent discharge into Christmas Creek and ultimately the Macleay river system. Treatment is via an earth bunded three pond system whereby effluent is broken down through sunlight penetration prior to treated water being used for onsite irrigation of holding paddocks. A truck wash system is linked to the process and the entire system meets Environmental Protection Authority requirements.

### **Flood Mitigation - \$320,287**

Water quality data is monitored at ten locations in the Lower Macleay Floodplain. Two mobile trailers provide Council with the flexibility to monitor water at other locations. The project is establishing long term base-line data sets of key water quality parameters and measures the effectiveness of operational and management changes. This project is a vital part of Council's Floodplain Project and is an integral part of projects under the Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils Program and Acid sulfate Soils Hot Spots Program. A web page has been developed so the community can access real time water quality data on a regular basis.



## Programs financed from the Levy from July 2003 – June 2007 cont.

### Boyters Lane Wetland Management Plan - \$26,710

The plan was prepared to identify strategies to rehabilitate and protect a degraded wetland system in order to accommodate the construction of playing fields in an ecologically sustainable manner. So far the plan has been successfully used as the basis for attracting approximately \$40,000 in external funding.

### Acid Sulphate Soils Hot Spot Program - \$80,153

As a result of past floodplain management practices, overdrainage of a significant area of the 310km<sup>2</sup> of the Macleay and Hastings floodplains known to be underlain by acid sulphate soils has resulted in significant adverse impacts on aquatic ecosystems. The program involves the preparation and implementation of strategies to address targeted problem areas.

As a direct result of this program, Council has been successful in attracting approximately \$1.2 million of grant funding from state and federal agencies which has facilitated a greatly expanded program including:-

- The Upper Belmore river Floodplain/ Wetland Rehabilitation Projects
- The Upper Kinchela Creek Floodplain/ Drainage Rehabilitation Projects
- The Lower Macleay River Floodplain/ Drainage Projects.

### Drainage Spencerville - \$106,705

A series of gross pollutant traps were installed at the end of existing stormwater pipes to intercept pollutants from the SWR industrial area prior to discharging into Spencers Creek.

### Gills Creek Rehabilitation Program - \$18,377

A detailed plan has been prepared identifying strategies to restore vegetation and aquatic systems. Baseline water and sediment quality data has been collected and audits undertaken of premises in the catchment to identify potential sources of pollution.

The plan will form the basis of applications for grant funding to fund the actions in the plan estimated to be \$217,000.

### Gross Pollution Traps - \$99,979

A gross pollution trap was installed at Lee Street, Crescent Head. This trap intercepted pollutants and debris from catchments representing approximately 55% of the Crescent Head village from entering Killick Creek.

### West Kempsey Cemetery Drainage - \$25,021

A channel drain was constructed through the West Kempsey Cemetery to channel overland flow into the existing stormwater network.

### South West Rocks Drainage - \$235,475

The drainage servicing the SWR Central Business District was upgraded to ensure stormwater emanating from this area was directed into gross pollutant traps in Horseshoe Bay Reserve. This GPT intercepts pollutants and debris prior to discharging into Saltwater Creek.



### ESD Policy Implementation - \$4,300

The policy which was largely developed utilising in-house resources, comprises a comprehensive local sustainability strategy and action plan designed to effectively integrate and manage environmental, social and economic issues within the Shire. The Levy was used to fund development of the strategy which included a comprehensive community consultation program with input from a community steering committee, mail-out campaign and advertising.

### Vegetation Mapping - \$9,095

The Levy was used to bring forward commencement of the project which involves preparation of a Shire-wide vegetation map identifying significant areas of vegetation for use in future strategic planning and environmental projects.

## PROPOSED PROGRAM IN 2007/08

During 2007/08 Council will continue with its Macleay River Floodplain project, as well as undertaking a number of environmental projects including:-

- Continuation of the Macleay River Floodplain Project
- Implementation of the Gills Creek Rehabilitation Plan
- Continuation of the Beachwatch water motoring program
- Riverbank Restoration Projects
- Floodplain Restoration Projects
- Implementation of the Saltwater, Killick and Korogora Creek Estuary Management Plans

### Grants Received as a Result of the Levy

An additional benefit to the community of having an Environmental Levy is that the commitment to fund projects attracts grant or industry funding. The following is a list of projects that were to be funded by the Environmental Levy but have been funded by grants or industry funding allowing Environmental Levy funds to be expended on other projects:-

McCuddens ASS Scald Project	\$ 12,000
Ptolemys ASS Scald project	\$ 19,000
Raffetys Drain Project	\$ 10,800
Saltwater Creek Floodgate project	\$ 7,000
Sillitoe Drain Wet Pasture Project	\$ 10,800
Thurgood Drain Wet pasture Project	\$ 10,800
Connection Creek Floodgate Project	\$ 7,000
Ptolemys Scald Fencing Project	\$ 1,200
Jerseyville River Bank Rehabilitation Project	\$ 45,000
Boyters Lane Wetland Project	\$ 42,000
Killick Creek EMP	\$ 30,000
Saltwater Creek EMP	\$ 30,000
Macleay River Project	\$ 20,000
Ass Officer	\$ 90,000
Coastal Acid Sulphate Soils Management Program	\$170,000
	\$505,600

### The Future

Council wishes to apply to the Department of Local Government for an extension of the Levy. Once again it is proposed that the Levy be a fixed amount of \$33 for the 2008/09 year increasing by \$1 per year of the program.

**Council also would like community input into future projects to be funded by the Levy. Please take the time to complete the Environmental Levy survey and return it to Council by 27 November 2007.**