

## Foreshore clearing

There are a lot of beautiful beaches in Queensland but one of the things that makes Mission Beach stand out is the vegetation just above the high tide mark. Because we have such a high rainfall, the salt-laden sand forming the front dune is sufficiently freshened for trees to survive in this precarious place.

This means that when you stand on the beach and look along the foreshore you see a solid backdrop of rainforest, and no buildings.

Sadly, the foreshore vegetation is constantly under pressure from people with beachfront properties, who want an unobstructed view of the sea from their verandahs. In their selfishness, they don't seem to realise that the rest of us will have to put up with seeing them instead of the trees.

The northernmost property on Kennedy Esplanade at South Mission Beach belongs to the Surf Lifesaving Club. There is a strip of forest between them and the beach that is continuous with the reserve R630 to its north. This part of the reserve was due to become National Park as part of the 1995 Crown Lands Strategy, but will now be held as Resource Reserve while the possibility of putting a sewage pipeline across it is being considered.

The 1996 Tipman Report on the Management of the Dune/Beach Ridge System at South Mission Beach states:

*"The vine forest at the northern end of South Mission Beach is in good condition. However, as this type of plant community is very restricted on sand areas along the coastline, every attempt needs to be made to ensure that it is managed to retain its integrity and to maintain it as a fully functioning and discrete plant community."*

And in a letter to Environmental Management Group dated July 20th, 2000, the then Minister for Environment and Heritage, Rod Welford, wrote:

*"I am aware that there have previously been requests for the Cardwell Shire Council to clear*

*vegetation on Kennedy Esplanade, seaward of the surf lifesaving clubhouse. This area has been inspected by officers of the Council and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and it was concluded that clearing for views would have a detrimental impact on the remnant vine forest vegetation community in this area and that such action may raise an expectation in the community that the clearing of vegetation on State land to attain sea views is an acceptable practice, which it is not."*

A copy of this letter was forwarded to Cardwell Shire Council, and it was brought to the Councillors' attention at their meeting of August 24th, 2000.

Despite all this, the Club has made another request to Council to clear the undergrowth in the forest opposite their clubhouse, and this was presented to the Works and Finance Meeting of February 22nd, 2001. Council agreed to the work and decided to seek permission from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prune 480m<sup>2</sup> of undergrowth.

In cases like this it is standard procedure for DNR to approach EPA for advice. One would expect EPA will say 'no' again and so permission will be refused.

The disturbing thing though is that this Council still has not taken on board the idea that clearing the foreshore, even if it is only the undergrowth, is bad for the Mission Beach environment.

The Mayor, Tip Byrne, claims he is environmentally aware, but it has been his Council that has :

(a) prevented reserve R630 from becoming partly National Park;

(b) agreed to the Sailing Club getting land to the north of the Surf Lifesavers that was to be National Park, and will now be cleared instead;

(c) agreed to clearing the undergrowth opposite the clubhouse in direct contradiction of EPA advice.

It is illegal to clear vegetation on the foreshore, but how are people

supposed to take this seriously when the Cardwell Shire Council doesn't take it seriously themselves?

### Sewerage

In my last article I wrote that the scheme that the Johnstone Shire Council is looking at would cost \$5.7 million for Stage 1, excluding the cost of land. This was wrong as the cost does include a whopping \$900,000 for 60 hectares of land. That equals \$6,000 per acre, which sounds very generous.

The Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) report includes maps of the properties in the Boyett Road area and their vegetation cover, and as far as I can see there isn't a cleared 60 hectare property available. Indeed it looks difficult to find more than 45 hectares in adjacent lots, and even then there would be houses close by.

On March 15th there was a meeting between Johnstone and Cardwell Shires to discuss sewerage options. The public was not invited. Cr. Fox has reported to the Progress Association that the Councils agreed to do an in-house study on the cost of pumping raw sewage from the three beach villages to Tully, for tertiary treatment and disposal to Banyan Creek.

Since SKM has already done a report on this for Cardwell Shire Council, dated October 10th, 2000, it is not clear why this needs to be done again. SKM costed this option at \$15.6 million (NPV @ 4%, whatever that means).

This costing assumes that EPA will not have a problem with disposal of effluent to Banyan Creek. This is by no means certain, and if you think back to the old GH&D proposal, you will remember that the joint councils rushed in and spent \$200,000 on land on the understanding that EPA would approve the location, only it turned out they didn't.

It is about time the Community Advisory Committee was reconvened so that the Councils aren't allowed to make any more blunders like that.

□ Dave Kimble