

Dirawong species to be identified

< Elaine Saunders

The Dirawong Reserve at Evans Head, which includes the Goanna Headland, Joggies and Chinamans Beach areas, is managed by a trust committee appointed by the NSW Minister for Lands.

The reserve is an area of great natural beauty, a home to rare and endangered plants, animals and birds and is listed as an area of national significance for native species and for indigenous cultural heritage.

The trust is about to embark on a species identification programme to enable us to better inform the public of what they are likely to see when they walk on the headland or visit the reserve beaches.

This may lead to a fox-baiting and wild-dog-baiting programme in the near future. Foxes, in particular, are one of the main threats to native wildlife.

This is nesting time for many of our species and so it is even more important that the committee enforce the trust bylaws which prohibit dogs on any area of the reserve, whether they are on a lead or not.

Most visitors are aware of the environmental importance of the reserve and leave their dogs at home, enabling everyone to enjoy a tranquil visit to one of the most beautiful spots on the North Coast.

Families, board-riders and fishermen have informed members of the committee that they enjoy the no-dog status of the reserve's beaches for other reasons. Whether it's safety of young children playing in clean sand or bait buckets, towels and clothing safe from canine interference, most people support the trust's position.

Generally, people are doing the right thing and we offer a big thank-you as it makes the job of the trust easier. However, there is still a problem with dogs and as part of the trust management strategy Richmond Valley Council rangers will increase their patrols of the reserve. People caught with dogs will be issued with infringement notices. The fine for having a dog on any part of the reserve is \$200 plus GST.

Trust members will also be doing duty and taking details of offenders to hand to the ranger.

So, if you know someone who is doing the wrong thing, tell them about this notice. It might not happen today, but they will get caught.



The view from the Dirawong Reserve, looking back to Chinamans Beach and Evans Head.



Donella's Desk

The past month has been busy with queries from residents on issues such as garbage bins, drains, toilets and parking – all basic services of a council.

I had the opportunity to attend a presentation by the Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre to learn about the wonderful services that they provide and I look forward to learning about the Casino Neighbourhood Centre in the near future. I had a wonderful day at Evans Head K-12 school as a participant in the Year 10 Authentic Assessment program. This is a great program to help our youth embark upon life after school. Congratulations to all involved.

Late November saw the due date for the next rate installment and water rates. Payment of rates again raised the question – what services are received for these rates? This is a fair and reasonable question, especially in this time of economic uncertainty when most people are looking for value for money. When a car is costing more than expected or it does not include desired features that may be standard features in another model of car we tend to compare or consider changing car. However, changing address and locality to achieve the best return for rates is not a practical solution compared to changing cars or phone package. Respective councils determine their rate structure and the levels of services that are provided. The current unified rate structure, applying the same ad valorem across the area, creates inequities of payments as to services received because of the need for rates to be based upon land values. It would be desirable for a review of rating structures that achieve a truly equitable system or consideration of rates reflective of locality and provided services.

Have you ever wondered how much it would cost councils if residents did not do all the things that they do because they care about their street, town or locality? How many hours are spent each week mowing nature strips, picking up

rubbish, sweeping footpaths or gutters, cleaning drains and tidying up public areas? Australians are known for their great sense of undertaking voluntary work. Tens of thousands of residents do these tasks year after year, primarily because of pride in their area. I have often thought of the cost involved, and wondered if anyone has actually tried to calculate the value of all this work. I am certain no council could afford to commence doing all this work. To all residents who mow nature strips, pick up rubbish, provide public toilets and many more tasks – an appreciative thank you.

Another reason for a kerb-side recycling service: The NSW government announced as part of the November mini budget, changes to the Waste and Environment Levy with a move to apply a levy on waste disposal in landfills to more councils. Sydney councils will be expected to pay \$56.70 per tonne per year to dispose of household waste to landfill from the start of the next financial year. This levy will be phased in on the North Coast, and other areas. It appears only a matter of time before all councils face such a levy. Reduction of landfill waste must be addressed for environmental reasons, let alone financial reasons.

The Environmental Protection and Heritage Council considered a review of the packaging covenant in November. It set targets for recycling packaging and provides opportunities for local government to obtain funding for projects that reduce the amount of packaging waste and improve packaging recycling. The level of recycling is improving with 40 per cent of packaging recycled in 2003, increasing to 56 per cent in 2007.

On that note, I hope it will not be too much of an imposition upon residents to take the bottles, cans and papers from the Festive Season celebrations to a recycling centre.

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas, have a wonderful time with friends and family. Safe travelling. No doubt 2009 will bring more challenges.

Donella

There's more to life

< Liina Flynn

Far from old-fashioned, husband and wife team Paul and Karina McKendrick have brought a modern face to the local Presbyterian Church at Evans Head.

During the past 12 years, the ordained minister and his wife have provided not only spiritual comfort for local residents, but have provided essential community services and created a web site where recorded Sunday sermons can be downloaded.

With four children of their own, the couple have built a community-based church with a growing congregation which also supports families and young people.

"When we first arrived, there were only about 30 people involved in the church and one young family," Paul said. "So we started up a 'Kid's Church' on Sundays which has age-specific lessons for the kids and we rejuvenated the after-school kids' club and youth group on Friday nights."

With the help of a core group of volunteers, the couple continue to run various activities through the church.

Called 'Connect Youth', the youth group runs games nights, excursions and outdoor 'wide game' strategy activities such as picture hunts and sound hunts and 'capture' games, as well as offering a Bible study for those interested. The church also runs a 'Mums and Bubs' activity group, a craft group and 'Growth Groups' where anyone can come along to build friendships and study the Bible.

Before becoming a Presbyterian minister, Paul was a physical-education, and still loves sport. "While teaching, I decided I not only wanted to teach people to be physically fit, but also spiritually," he said. Paul then went to Bible college before becoming ordained and then moved to Evans Head with wife Karina and their children.

Taking on the role of full-time mother and minister's wife has not always been easy for Karina.

"When I first came I found it hard not being accepted," she said. "As a minister's wife, I was put on a pedestal, but I'm just like everybody else. I just have a strong faith in god."

With her strong beliefs, Karina has found an important place in the community and believes keeping families stable is important for communities.

"My great passion in my life, other than Jesus, is my family, making sure they feel loved and secure," she said. "If we are all happy, that benefits everybody else."

Rather than seeing their church as being about religion, the couple see their core focus as building a loving relationship with Jesus and providing opportunities for people to connect with each other.

"As Christians we believe people are designed to be connected to each other and if they aren't connecting, they crave it, life is all about relationships," Karina said.

"On Sundays, it's a service, but it's a relationship oriented one. We interact with people and teach them how the Bible impacts on the way we live," Paul said. "It's important we spend time with the community, being their friend, helping them out and loving them."

Karina and Paul believe that the activities they involve themselves in during the week are just as important as what they teach in church on Sunday mornings.

"You've got to walk your talk," Karina said. "We help people think of practical ways of putting love into action. For example, the Bible says we should care for widows, so we give people ideas on how to show that love and care. We can do shopping for them, cook them a meal,



Paul and Karina McKendrick: Helping people think of practical ways to put love into action.

or involve them in a family activity like a picnic."

While there have been some tragedies within the small Evans Head community over the past year, the couple believe that providing community support to each other through these difficult times is the key to growing as Christians.

"As a community we cry and go through agony together and support and put our arms around each other. No-one goes through it alone," Paul said.

"It's a fact that life does suck sometimes, and god realises that's the case too. He wants to help you through it and provides the people around you to support you through these times," said Paul.

Keeping faith through the hard times in life is something that Paul and Karina understand can be difficult for many people.

"There's no magic formula," Karina said. "As a Christian, when difficult times come up, you just know to trust god, it's a deep trust and faith and conviction you have."

Paul wants to offer hope to anyone suffering through the financial crisis taking place across the world.

"We're realising more and more that maybe materialism and money isn't the ultimate answer to our problems, but money can be the cause," Paul said. "People want to have faith that things can get better, that there's a bigger plan behind what goes on in the world."

"After 9/11 in America, a phenomenal amount of people flocked to church. When there's a sense that this world's going crazy, people want to hold on to something that's solid. Christianity gives people faith to hold on to, that there is more to life."

"Ultimately, we want to support the community by being there for them. We will still be here for people whether they believe what we believe or not. We still want to show love and compassion to everyone."

If you would like to contact Paul and Karina McKendrick, you can phone them on: 66824976, or email paulmckendrick@exemail.com.au .

The church web site can be found at: <http://www.ehpchrch.libsyn.com> .