

going down the drain....

Blair McNamara 24th January 2006

The “wonderland” that is, Coolum’s First Bay has been undergoing an environmental facelift to stabilize a major drain and many locals are concerned that the council led operation will remain a scar on one of Australia’s prettiest paradises.

Our public environment is largely managed by our local governments, voluntary citizen action groups or both in combination, with little or no monetary injection from our State or Federal Governments and our State Government largely dumps the responsibility of coastal care onto local councils.

Such a pity this is, as our beaches are this country’s first draw card and the only place where most people can enjoy nature.

With so many departments within the Maroochy Shire Council it is becoming evident to Coolum District Coast Care and C.R.R.A.G.

(Coolum Road Reserve Action Group) that there is a growing lack of in-house consultation occurring in the management of environmental projects.

Such is the case, currently at Coolum’s First Bay.

In 2001, C.R.R.A.G. signed an agreement with Maroochy Shire Council that council would consult the group before commencing works on our foreshores but works at First Bay commenced before christmas without any interactive consulting of the organizations.

Is this communication breakdown a deliberate policy of local council or is this mismanagement being created by council staff’s inability to keep pace with the rapid unsustainable growth occurring in our region?

Last week, chairman of C.R.R.A.G., Stan Ryan, contacted council to question their seemingly unsophisticated methods of heavy engineering ‘fix’ at the drain site.

He was informed that council’s decision to go over the site with machines and excavate the site into a straight trench as their best decision.

After that, it was lined with leftovers of Mount Coolum (pale blue) quarried boulders down to the famous bright orange rock forms that confront the open ocean.

Prior to council spraying of the weeds on the site, Mr. Stan Ryan offered the services of his Work For The Dole crew to continue their strategic weeding of Coolum’s foreshore and to holistically evaluate and potentially restore the drain’s exit at the site.

Instead, the OK was given for council workers to bomb the area with weed killer, which left the raw dirt exposed to this past month of tropical downpours.

This revealed the location of the drain and erosion soon made the area a mess.

Perhaps a lack of time and money has led to council’s rapid action on the site to be done as cheaply as it appears to be.

Mr. Ryan feels that the benefits of having an agreement between council and C.R.R.A.G. are not being met.

“Perhaps the council’s regard for this sensitive environment is an outfall of their current ‘works’ overload on their job sheets”, he said.

As more developments continue, where lands once absorbed the bulk of water and natural springs are plugged up (diverted to where?), rain run-off from the built surfaces, such as roads, carparks and roofing will continue to escalate.

Clean water is now a rare resource and a solution must be found to use it rather than discarding it to a salty ocean.

In this era of ‘buying water’, is water managed appropriately and are storm drains on public beaches acceptable?

Is ‘good value’ going down the drain?