

Aboriginal flag flown from jail's flagpole

Story: SARAH FAIRWEATHER
Picture: CATHY BOWEN

MAITLAND — An Aboriginal flag was raised outside Maitland jail yesterday to mark National Aboriginal Week as inmates and officers launched Koori activities in Maitland.

As part of the International Year of the Indigenous People celebrations, Koori prisoners took part in an aboriginal barbecue, complete with "roo" meat and wild tomato chutney.

An aboriginal music concert and touch football game with inmates from St. Helier's Correctional Centre in Muswellbrook were also on the agenda.

Renowned Aboriginal author Ruby Langford was a special guest to the jail, captivating her Koori prisoner audience with poetry recitals. Her books and other aboriginal literature was on sale.

The Jail's Koori Counsellor, Ms Carol Bissett, said most aboriginal prisoners in Maitland suffer the effects of isolation and alienation — a condition further aggravated by a lack of support from outside Aboriginal community groups.

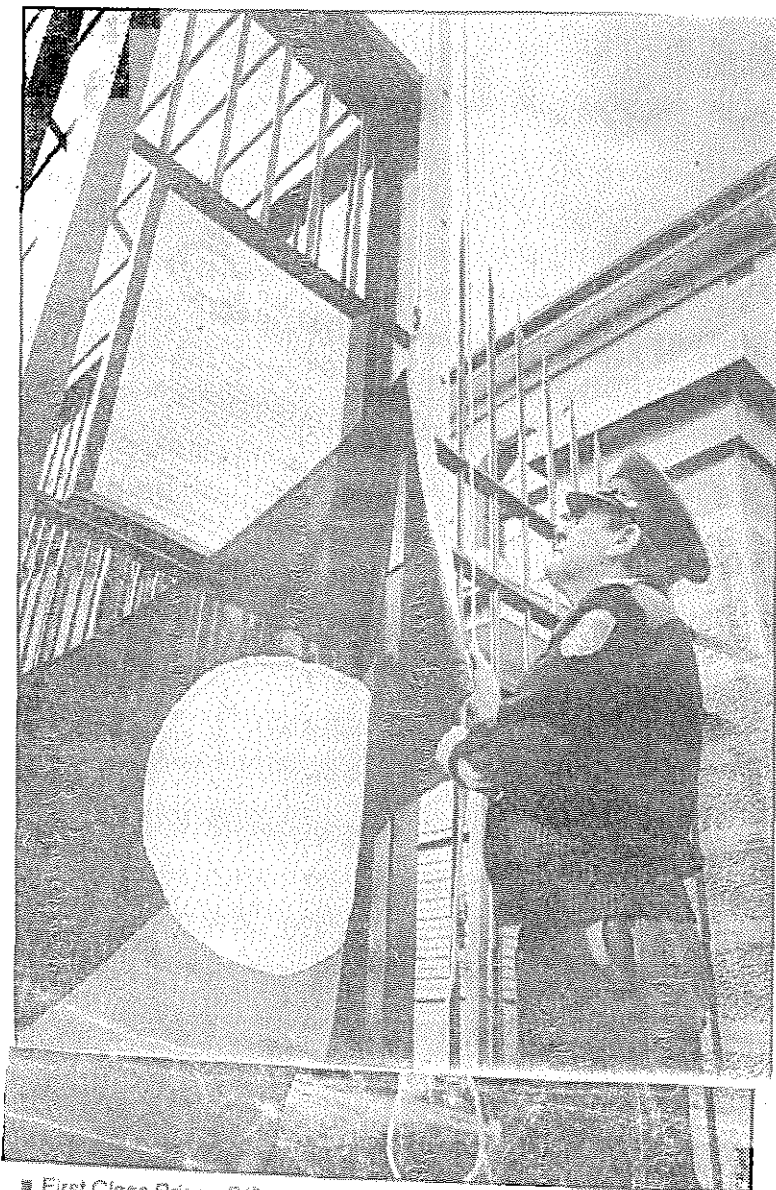
"Most of the Koori prisoners here come from their hometown of Grafton and Kempsey. While they're in jail, few outside Koori groups show interest in them and there is very little support in the way of rehabilitation when they leave jail," Ms Bissett said.

Jail Superintendent, Mr Max Ayrton, agrees this is a problem which needs to be addressed.

"The Koori prisoners have responded favourably to the aboriginal art education program we have had running at the jail. That is one positive education program which has proven to work in jail," Mr Ayrton said.

The jail's art teacher, Mr Bruce Copping of Bolwarra, said for the Aboriginal prisoners, the art is a way for them to reconnect with their culture. Currently a display of prisoners' art is exhibiting at Different Image Gallery in High Street Maitland.

"The art allows the Aboriginals to see that their culture is worth having. A Koori prisoner, Ron Smith, was able to find work as an artist after leaving through the skills he acquired in jail," Mr Copping said.



■ First Class Prison Officer Joe Fairbanks raises the Aboriginal flag at Maitland Jail.

THE MAITLAND MERCURY

FRI, JULY 9 1993.

Bay school a model for Aboriginal study

Video to be made for teachers to study

Nelson Bay Public School has been selected as a national model for Aboriginal studies and set the scene for a teacher-training video filmed on Friday.

The video is a nationwide project backed by the media department of the University of NSW.

The crew also visited Nelson Bay High School to get an idea of its award-winning environmental program.

Nelson Bay Public School's Tanderra Trail nature walk was the backdrop for the video.

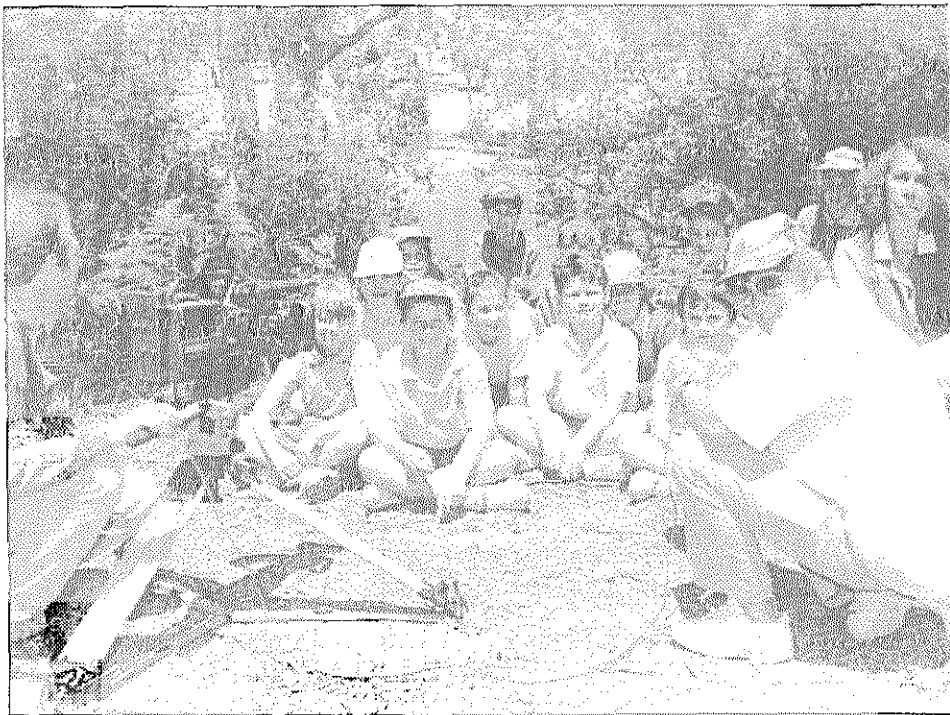
The nature walk was established with heavy input from local Worimi identity Carol Bissett, who features on the video.

"The video will be used for pre-teacher training and give ideas how the local community can help develop an Aboriginal perspective in the school curriculum," said Nelson Bay Public School principal, Miss Elaine Fereday.

"Carol helped a lot with the trail and the selection of its name and she is very generous with her time to the school."

Ms Bissett said the video highlighted Aboriginal cultural history and environmental issues.

"This project is especially important in the Year of Indigenous People because people are looking to come together and understand each other," she said.



■ The film crew and students on the walking trail.

Don't develop Mambo Creek

SIR — The *Examiner* has recently published some informative articles and letters relating to the Mambo Creek wetlands, including the identification of middens and the concern of the Worimi women about their Sacred Places being considered for residential development.

Not enough attention has been given to the original reason for opposing the council's proposals to develop the wetland fringes as well as the peninsula of sandhills running into the middle of the basin.

The effect of pollution on the area is already beginning to show in discolouration and stress of the vegetation where drainage enters the wetlands and the colour of the sludge flowing into Salamander Bay yet only a small proportion of the potential residential catchment has been built on (Spinnaker Way valley; Yachtsman Cres. hill).

To the remaining lots must be added Bagnalls Beach Road and the west side of Gan Gan Hill.

The Mambo Creek wetlands have been filtering drainage as part of nature's complete ecosystem, as well as breeding prawns, oysters and fish for Port Stephens.

Within a few years, this whole area could become a sinking cess-pool of rotting vegetation — adding further offense to the poison which caused it's death — the whole lot being sucked into the port by tidal action.

The relatively small area of land involved is NOT waste just because it is not built on — it can contribute more to the quality of life and attraction of tourists by being nurtured and displayed while performing its natural functions.

Concerned citizens all over Port Stephens should encourage their councillors to preserve as much buffer as possible around and within the wetlands because this is in everybody's best interest.

PORT STEPHENS EXAMINER.
SEPTEMBER 27, 1993. P. 4

Worimis plea on Mambo



■ Corlette supporters on site Harold Norton (left) and Neville Newton.

PORT STEPHENS EXAMINER
WEDS. AUGUST 18. 1993. P.1.

Aborigines and conservationists are gearing up to fight a new plan for housing on land which juts out into the Mambo Creek wetlands at Salamander Bay.

The plan, proposed for Port Stephens Council's Salamander estate, was considered at last night's council committee meeting.

"It's time at least one site of importance to Aborigines was preserved," a member of the Port-based Worimi tribe, Ms Carol Bissett, yesterday told the *Examiner*.

"This site is spiritual to us.

"It was a place where lots of Kooris met and despite being sandmined there are significant middens remaining.

FERTILITY

"It also contains a plant which was the totem symbol of Worimi women which signified fertility."

Last night she and a Newcastle botanist, Mr Don McNair, were to appear before the council committee pushing her case.

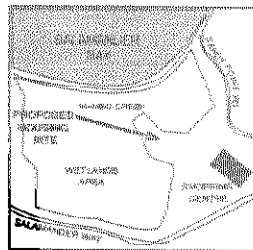
They are backed by environmentalists who oppose the idea of creating at least 80 homesites on the 17ha sandhill.

NSW Fisheries has also expressed concern about the impact drainage runoff from housing on the site would have on the nearby oyster spat catching area in Salamander Bay.

"We've (the Worimis) been ignored too many times in the past by development around Port Stephens," said Ms Bissett.

She said her people believed that in the Year of Indigenous People curbing further develop-

Worimis say site is spiritual



■ The area in dispute

ment at Salamander around Mambo would be a significant gesture for the council to make.

She said the area should then become a centre for Aboriginal studies and the environment.

"It would save a site of importance to us and promote better understanding between different peoples," she said.

"We see it as a centre where all people could come and learn about our culture and the environment."

Ms Bissett ideas are echoed by the local precinct.

Precinct secretary Jeff Cordwell said the 17ha site could with appropriate grants and volunteer

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Call for Mambo re-think

□ FROM PAGE 1

support become an educational and eco-tourist centre.

Ideas included a theatre, boardwalks and walking trails.

Nelson Bay High School already conducted field studies in the area.

Conditional support has already come from the Mayor, Cr Bartlett.

But he said there was "no way" the council would block the whole 17ha from development.

Consultants had recommended a compromise.

The eastern section of the site

could be developed for housing with the western section closer to the wetlands preserved.

Drainage would be away from the wetlands.

He welcomed the idea of an eco-tourist centre and suggested a statue park could be included.

"The Bay needs more than beaches to attract visitors," he said.

A council staff report considered last night has called on the council's Salamander project manager to rethink the proposed housing plan.

The matter is up for debate at next week's council meeting.

DEVELOPMENT TO PROCEED

Different views on the proposal

PORT Stephens Council is to proceed with a 77 lot subdivision adjacent to Wanda Avenue in Soldiers Point, a decision that has brought forward some opposing views those of local residents and others and council view - both sides are featured below.

Residents view

FOR many years residents of Wanda Ave, Kemp St, and Boronia Ave in Salamander Bay have been fighting to preserve the last remaining original coastal forest on the Peninsula from a proposed Port Stephens Council residential subdivision..

Containing old trees which are said to be more than 500 years old and an assortment of rare native flora and fauna, the land is also the site of the old Aboriginal Women's Watering Hole.

According to residents, the land, which is bounded in part by the above three streets, was originally crown land.

Since the zoning of the area to residential, local resident groups and Aboriginal groups have been fighting to have it re-zoned a reserve to preserve the natural bushland.

Local surveyor and naturalist, Michael Smith carried out a series of tag and releases on the site proposed for development last year and discovered a number of rare Northern Brown Bandicoots resident in bushland.

With the information he gained about the rare flora and fauna on the site, Mr Smith wrote to Port Stephens Council with a proposal to remove the fauna from the site before the land was cleared.

In a meeting with council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Mr Smith was told that he was denied permission to remove any fauna.

"Instead, NPWS said they would put a light bush fire through the area before development to chase the wildlife out," said Mr Smith.

"I was horrified that a department purporting to protect

the environment would propose such an idea.

"It is well known that bushfires kill approximately 60% of flora and fauna and then the remaining 40% would have to run the gauntlet between houses to shelter. The survival rate of the bandicoots would be very low," Mr Smith said.

Since the first tag and release carried out by Mr Smith at the end of 1992, he has caught more bandicoots and spent countless hours showing awe-inspired city children the wonders of the bush.

According to Mr Smith, Port Stephens Council could easily make the \$2 million they intend through development, from eco-tourism instead.

"It may take a while longer but they would preserve the bushland and if they decide in the future that they made a mistake they can develop the land then. Development is irreversible," said Mr Smith.

What surprises residents most is that much of the land in question lies below sea level and would require extensive filling and drainage.

"It will cost rate payers a lot for council to develop the land and even then the blocks won't be very good to build on," said local resident, Mr Neil Goudge.

"If council develop the area it will cause drainage problems for the whole area up to the Mambo site," said Mr Goudge.

In addition to this, according to Mr Smith the sea level is expected to rise between 30cm and a metre.

What concerns residents most at present is the appearance of survey pegs on the land in question.

"It looks like they are starting the subdivisions and we won't have a say," said local resident, Mr Norm Warman.

"I'd like to see this area preserved for my grandchildren, not for me," he said.

Council view

THE Times sought comment from Port Stephens Council on the concerns raised by residents to which Mayor Innes Creighton responded that much of the residents information was not factual.

He said, "The land has been zoned for residential development since at least 1974 and had never been zoned as any type of public open space or reserve.

"The site which contains some 11 hectares is surrounded by residential and industrial development, all of which would have taken place within the last 20 years, i.e. since 1974.

Mayor Creighton said "In planning this sub-division, Council has gone to the nth degree to ensure that every as-

pect, environmental, aesthetic and services such as drainage, roadworks, etc, would meet the highest standards and would result in a model sub-division. We have commissioned two ecological studies, consulted with National Parks and Wildlife Services and complied with all of their recommendations."

Public Reserve

"As a part of the proposal to develop the site, 45% of the land zoned for residential de-

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