

Fish decline off Port among Tassie topics



■ Ms Ridgeway-Bissett — To lead a workshop.

The decline in fish stocks in and off Port Stephens will be raised at a conference underway this week in Tasmania.

Port Worimi tribe member Ms Carol Ridgeway-Bissett is one of a few Aborigines in the Hunter region invited to the Federal Government sponsored National Indigenous Searights conference which got

underway on Monday in Hobart.

At the conference she is to lead a workshop outlining the impact European settlement has had on local fish numbers.

“There’s no doubt there’s been a depletion in stocks,” she said.

“Urban development and run-off has also had an impact.

Wanda land battle is not over yet

by MICHELLE MEXON

The battle to save an environmentally and Aboriginal-sensitive site in Wanda Avenue, Salamander Bay, has been won — but the war will continue.

Activists will lobby Port Stephens councillors to act on their unanimous decision this month to preserve and protect the 17ha parcel of land.

A spokeswoman for the traditional owners of the land, Carol Ridgeway-Bisset, said the 10-year issue was not over.

"We have to put pressure on the council to do what they said they would which is to rezone the land to a 7k zoning and adopt a voluntary conservation agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service," she said.

"But what we also want to see is the area nominated and registered as an Aboriginal Place although this takes much longer to be proclaimed than the rezoning."

Cr Geoff Robinson said the 7k zoning did not rule out future development in the area.

"The councillors decided to take this path after a briefing with the National Parks and Wildlife Service about a co-operative arrangement," he said.

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"This zoning doesn't rule out any future development, you can still develop in the 7k zoning providing you address all the conservation issues ... so a development proposal could still at some stage be put before the council."

Ms Ridgeway-Bisset said the area which has been the subject of a 10-year controversy over development, was a Worimi sacred women's site and was the scene of a massacre.

A disease-free colony of koalas and 58 eucalypt trees of a threatened species have also been identified in the area.

Council votes to protect 17ha site but activist says a rezoning is needed



■ Carol Ridgeway-Bisset — wants to see the area registered as an Aboriginal place.

Wanda 'win for people'

THE people crowding the gallery at Port Stephens Council erupted last night as council-owned land at Salamander Bay was rezoned a nature reserve.

After seven years residents had won the battle to have the land on Wanda Ave rezoned as part of a voluntary conservation agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The zoning means the council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service will protect the land's natural and cultural heritage while the council maintains ownership.

'The council has entered into discussion with National Parks and Wildlife, including making Wanda an Aboriginal place of significance,' Cr Darryl Dawson said.

The site is significant for a number of reasons, including that it houses a koala habitat and is of Aboriginal cultural value.

Worimi traditional custodian Carol Ridgeway-Bissett said the zoning decision was a boost for those who had fought for the land.

'It shows what people power can do,' she said.

— Mardi Boardman