

Byron-Belongil Env Group

The Belongil Group is now known as the Byron-Belongil Env Group. I've added Byron because I realized that many people don't think of town and the Belongil/W Byron all as part of one catchment.

Meeting 21st Jan

Our meeting was in two parts. The first part was a discussion about the water infrastructure in town and the Byron Master Plan. The Plan is a great opportunity to start addressing flooding, pollution and stormwater problems at the town centre. After all, the Town Clock is the lowest part in the catchment and the narrow entry point to the Butler St Drain. John Sparks presented his plan, which we used as discussion starters. The talking points raised help focus ideas about what is needed in town. (The discussion is not to be seen as a blanket endorsement of the Sparks Plan). This summary of the evening was forwarded to the McGregor Coxall, to contribute to the project.



The second part of the evening was another discussion about the ways the group can work with council, both staff and elected officials. Two options are 1. creating a council committee (which will take six months), and 2. running meetings which include councillors and staff to address the water issues across the many projects. Another issue raised was to engage with other groups involved with coastal and catchment water.

Since then, the Mayor Simon Richardson has put to council to organize a community group roundtable, much like the business and sports group ones. That motion was passed. Maybe this will be a forum for advocating water sensitive urban design and integrated water management.

Talking points raised during group discussion with Sparks: 21 Jan 2015

1. **The history of springs, billabongs and ponds within and outside of town. The relationship between all of them**
 - A. The location of the ponds in Spark's plan agrees with historical memories of residents
 - B. Some members know of or have capped springs within the town
 - C. Some residents describe swimming in waters of Sandhill and Butler Street/market area so that depth of the waters would be at least a metre.
 - D. Some residents ask how water features would be safeguarded to protect children from drowning how mosquitoes and blue green algae blooms would be controlled
 - 1.) some explained that water features would be sloping, not drop-offs
 - 2.) Biological research explains that prawn larvae eat mosquito larvae. Historically, the Belongil grew many prawns. Such biological controls are also part of coastal habitat restoration and could be planned/assisted.
 - 3.) There are various ecological and technological hybrid designs to guard against blue green algal blooms. These would need to be incorporated.

- E. Any retention basins should be multipurpose purifying water and also enhancing wildlife corridors and offering pedestrian/cycling access
 - F. any retention basins should have grey water redistribution plans as well
- 2. The significance of open spaces within town and the wider catchment**
- A. The primary importance of Railway Park as community centre was reconfirmed.
 - B. The need for a uniquely Byron and accommodating 'first stop' in town was reconfirmed.
 - 1.) The Transit Centre is important but the management of buses is vital to help traffic flow congestion: dozens of buses and shuttles arrive at the centre of town each day.
 - 2.) The welcoming facility and traffic management in the Spark's plan also balanced tourism with community use and interests to the centre of town each day.
 - 3.) The plan also concurs with the 2005 EIS for the Butler Street bypass, an issue very important to the people who live there.
 - 4.) Diverting parking to Butler Street area with walking paths to town also provides an opportunity for permeable parking, stormwater collection and purification and other features of water sensitive urban design. These are preferred to the current council proposal of levees and pumps reinforcing the work of the Butler Street drain only as a drain.
- 3. The Sandhills area is seen as a potential precinct for community.**
- A. One suggestion was that the courthouse becomes the Shire's official Art Gallery.
 - B. The proposed environment centre and the permaculture gardens would also have links with other community projects in Mullumbimby
 - C. Beyond the Sandhill up to the Arakwal Depot is another area for water sensitive urban design and restoration likely to include ponds.
 - D. All these works can act and would enhance water quality of the outfall on Clarke's beach. Redistribution of grey water may also lessen the volume of the outfall.
 - E. This area is part of an important water and wildlife corridor connecting the beaches with the Arakwal Park on one side and the Cumbebin swamp and the Belongil on the other. Water and wildlife are also connected to the highest point in town at the top of Paterson Street, as well as the residential section beyond the sports field.
- 4. The main beach areas are seen as places which could be managed better for both community and visitors.**
- A. Minimising built environments and supporting wildlife and habitat features. These are best face to put forward to hazards such as storms and sea level changes.
 - B. For these reasons, support was high for diverting traffic, relocating the pool, making soft structures such as open air amphitheatres and features of water sensitive urban design to manage the outfall/drain on the main beach
 - C. Again, redistribution of grey water throughout the town and the wider catchment would minimize the outflow on the beach
- 5. The town clock is the lowest place in town.**
- A. The point of greatest potential for flooding because of the small passage underground under the railway and to Butler Street drain.
 - B. The town clock itself and its position could be refurbished with mosaics that depict the water flows, celebrate wildlife and history with motifs that could be extended to other parts of the catchment, using public art that relates back to this central town feature.
 - C. Public art to present the water flows and wildlife corridors is important because it provides a durable explanation/reminders/touchstone that goes beyond a short term education program
 - D. Some examples are already features of town: mosaics around town roundabouts, in footpaths, dot paintings on poles
- 6. the Butler Street area**
- A. the drain requires revamping according to water sensitive urban design

- B. In the 1950s, there was a swimming hole here.
 - C. The area of the markets is the site of the former town rubbish dump. 25 years have elapsed since it was last used. Some people worry this makes the land available for changes of use.
- 7. The submission process for the coastal zone management plan is an early 2015**
- A. Issues in this plan are significant to the Master Plan (erosion, rock walls, soft engineering, restoration of natural coastal protections, dredging)
 - B. Another issue is the dredging of the Belongil which originally was an intermittently closed lagoon, not an estuary. Reducing the flow of stormwater as well as redistributed effluent is important for the future planning of dredging
 - 1.) Right now water backing up at the start of the Butler Street drain to the level of 1 m is the trigger for council to dredge the Belongil opening. This is a contested practice.
 - 2.) Water sensitive urban design can slow down and retain rainwater/stormwater. This has repercussions for the Belongil and the far side of the catchment.
- 8. The Arakwal presence and history must be given more scope**
- A. Public art signage and other community infrastructure and spaces are all opportunities to include important images and words in Bundjalung language
 - B. If not already undertaken, special consultation is important.
 - 1.) In recent history, Arakwal people gift land for the high school, the library and courthouse
 - 2.) The walking Trail & signage and the entire Arakwal Park are award-winning and rank in the top 20 parks in the world. Their experience and concerns is important to the Master Plan.
- 9. Planning targets and works for zero-carbon/food security/solar energy/climate change important to members**