

IN THE DRINK?

In your last edition you published comments attributed to Larry Anthony which stated that he had "vivid memories of travelling along the dirt road from South Golden Beach to Wooyung one night in the 80's to find myself almost in the drink because Alan Bond had made an illegal canal cutting right through to the ocean".

The only problem with that statement is that the only cut of the dirt road (the road incidentally is illegal) was made by the American developers of the Ocean Shores estate, Princess Properties, as a condition of development consent for the construction of the canal in the early 70's.

Having followed that development condition the canal was open to the ocean until late 1976 when it was ordered closed by the council in July 1976.

This was done only after the developers, Princess Properties, had council accept liability for the increased flood heights caused by the closure.

This acceptance by Council of liability for consequent flooding caused by this closure is clearly documented in Council minute 631 dated 27th July 1976.

There were several warnings to Council of their liability caused by this closure and their non compliance with the development conditions by the Public Works Department, including a warning from the Minister for Public Works who in 1982 in part told Council it "is likely to be in an invidious position in the event of flooding and damage to property".

Council lost their planning powers in the early eighties and a planning administrator Jim Waugh appointed an acting manager to Council Ray Rawson, who in turn appointed a retired engineering acquaintance, Mr Frank Cranston, to examine the deed of agreement between the development company and the government of the day to investigate if there were any bonding issues still outstanding on the development.

The original development was covered by a deed of agreement between the government and the development company which bonded various issues including the flood outlet before the land was allowed to be developed or sold.

Frank Cranston on 2nd December 1986 issued a confidential report to Councillors

which "contained potentially damaging material" that confirmed he had found both the council minute of 1976 and subsequent government warnings of council's liability for flooding caused by the closure. He went further and warned the flooding now not only affected Ocean Shores but Golden Beach as well.

In his report Cranston also acknowledged Council had held a bond for the outlet since the early 70's.

This report by Cranston was censored before release to the public and reference the liability of council was covered over by a thick black line.

Original Councillor copies contain the uncensored clauses and of course the Council Minutes are still intact because they cannot be censored.

I have been informed that Cranston has since denied that he wrote the report in the uncensored version, which is a ridiculous claim.

On Mothers' Day 1987 there was a heavy rain event in the Shire and property flooding occurred in the area as the floodwaters could no longer escape to the ocean because of the outlet closure. Properties were inundated in areas that had not been flooded before in 1974.

In fact in 1974, in a much worse rain event, which was also coupled with the highest recorded tidal surge on the east coast of Australia (caused by heavy cyclonic activity) there were no properties flooded at Ocean Shores.

Readers may recall the flooding in Brisbane and the destruction of a village called Sheltering Palms immediately north of the north break wall at Brunswick Heads during the 1974 event, when 22 houses were destroyed.

During the flooding of Mothers' Day 1987, there were repeated calls from the flooded residents and from the State Emergency Services (confirmed by SES log books) to reopen the closed outlet to relieve the flooding but these calls were ignored by Council engineer of the day, Greg Alderson.

A couple of days after the Mothers' Day flood, I chaired a meeting at our Ocean Shores Roundhouse sales office (there being no community halls in the area at the time) where aggrieved residents and SES officers confirmed those calls to open up the blocked outlet.

Prior to and after the flood of 1987, the development company (which was sold to a

Bond company in 1981 by my real estate firm) offered to reopen and maintain the closed outlet. Council steadfastly refused this offer.

Early aerial photos clearly show several flood outlets to the ocean between New Brighton and Wooyung and a Lands Department map dated October 1887 show a major outlet at Wooyung to the ocean from Billinudgel Creek.

This major natural outlet is also now closed.

The bund erected across the canal in the early 90's at North Ocean Shores is also in breach of the development consent conditions given to Bond's company for the release of the canal blocks as that consent was conditional upon the construction of a bridge.

This bund was constructed by a later development company, MEOWN, who bought that part of land previously owned by the Bond company and this bund is also a major cause of further flooding in the area.

The myth of the size of Billinudgel Wetland and claims of illegal openings to the ocean has been created by a local environmental lobby BEACON and was started in 1983 when BEACON had a major input into the Draft Plan for the area in 1983.

You will find acknowledgements in the Council Planning papers supporting the Draft Plan, produced by planning consultants for Council in 1983 of that BEACON input and also their misleading statements in relation to the "history" of the natural outlets to the ocean in this area.

I suspect it was created by BEACON to try and block development in the area without them being aware that the process of actually creating this large artificial wetland has caused considerable harm to existing residential development built to safe flood levels prior to these blockages occurring.

It is unfortunate that the myth has been repeated by both newspapers and politicians alike in their haste to align themselves with green votes in our area.

It is easy to produce predevelopment photographic evidence of the area now called Billinudgel Wetland that shows no areas of permanent water and defined dry flood path channels to the ocean, now blocked by man made obstructions.

One classic is that of the actual construction of Golden Beach showing the bulldozing of a large area of ground into a major outlet channel to the ocean in the vicinity of Helen Street.

The surveyor for that Golden Beach project is still alive and is happy to confirm that he warned the Council of the day that the area would flood if blocked and should never have been filled.

After the 1987 Mothers' Day flood, Byron Council reinforced the closed outlets in the area by bulldozing sand up from the beach to create a large frontal dune to replace sand lost to beach erosion caused by the retaining walls built by PWD.

PWD have acknowledged in their own reports that these walls at the mouth of the Brunswick River have accelerated beach erosion significantly.

This action of blocking outlets by Council is in distinct contrast to actions taken in Byron Bay where periodically the sand is removed from the Belongil to allow floodwaters to escape in that area.

Strangely Council had no similar reservations about cutting a channel through an area in Byron Bay at Pacific Vista estate (which was clearly identified as being of significant aboriginal importance in the same 1983 planning papers) when that area also flooded badly in 1987.

The rock wall erected across the mouth of Marshalls Creek in the early 60's has been identified as a major source of

blockage by Robin Warner for Webb McKeown and Associates, Council's current flood consultants.

These same flood consultants have now computer modelled conclusively that if these outlets were open to the ocean and the accumulation of sand caused by these blockages were removed from the river, no flooding would occur in the Ocean Shores area as planned by the original developers of the estate.

There would be massive reductions in flood levels elsewhere.

The other benefit to dredging and removing these accumulated blockages is that the water quality within the canal and the river would dramatically improve if there was an efficient tidal flushing throughout the system. Something that has been self evident to most long term residents for years.

This of course doesn't mean you should automatically develop these areas behind these natural outlets as these flood paths, while not containing any water 99% of the time, should remain available to reduce flood levels when flood rains do occur.

I find it amusing when we have people calling the water in the existing North Ocean Shores area "natural" when these water areas were created by bulldozers by

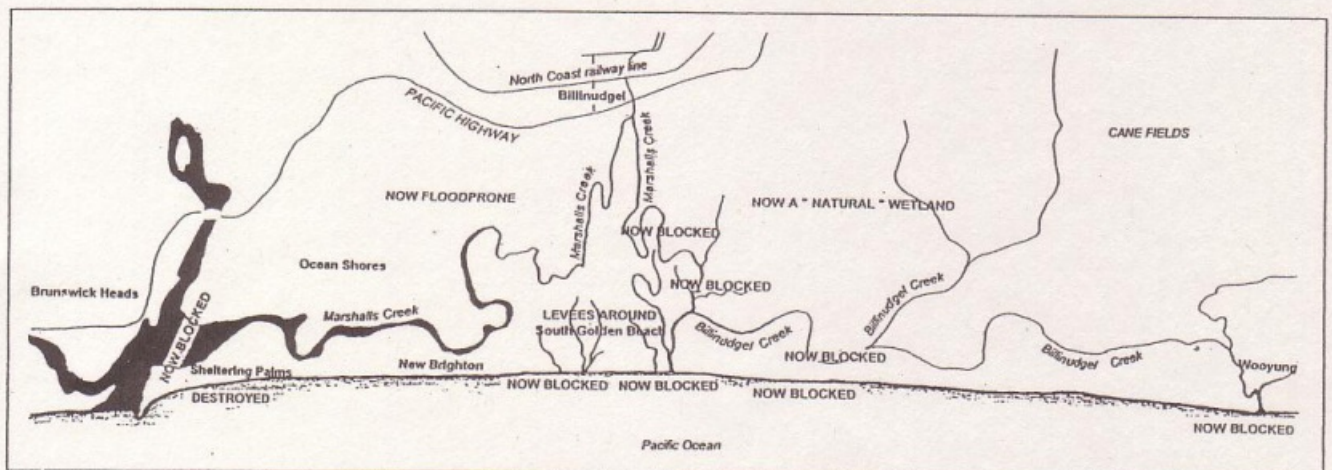
the original American developers less than 25 years ago.

In order to fully appreciate the man made changes that have recently created this wetland behind Golden Beach, I provide a copy of a map drawn accurately from historical photographs and surveyed early Lands Department maps of the natural drainage pattern for the area to the ocean with the subsequent man made changes to that historical drainage.

While never having been a fan of Alan Bond, I don't think Larry can blame him for something he never did. Either the drink Larry vividly remembers almost going into one night was pre 1976 when the canal was legally open to the ocean, or more likely, it was indeed the early 80's as claimed by him, and it was one of the huge water filled holes that appears regularly on the old mining road between Wooyung and Golden Beach every time it rains, that he nearly went into.

From the easily documented facts, it is also very evident that Alan Bond never legally or illegally cut the canal into the ocean and I hope that if Larry is indeed "aiming to provide Richmond with a strong and effective voice" he has a better "vivid" memory recall than that attributed to him on this issue.▲

-Jim Mangleson



This map has been drawn from historical aerial photographs which clearly show the natural drainage pattern for the catchment area. It is evident that the central natural system of Marshalls Creek and Billinudgel Creek has been totally removed in the vicinity of South Golden Beach, and that village has now been surrounded by levee banks to protect it from the consequential rise in floodwaters. The mouth of Marshalls Creek has been blocked by a rock wall configuration built in Readings Bay by the Public Works Department in the 1960's. The major natural outlet of Billinudgel Creek to the north of South Golden Beach has also been closed by man made obstructions. The loss of a small village called Sheltering Palms, immediately north of Brunswick Heads, occurred in 1974 and was a direct result of the erection of sea walls by the Public Works Department during the 1960's. As a consequence of these major alterations to the natural drainage system, an area to the north west of South Golden Beach has now become a swamp and all areas to the south of the blockages in the South Golden Beach area have now become floodprone.