



Better Health for All

August 2002

Issue 2

SAVING **5 TONNE** OF FAT

Healthy Cities Manager, Frank Wallner, conservatively estimates that by reducing fat in pies sold through Illawarra school canteens we will cut about 5 tonne of fat off local school children each year.

The 'Healthier food for healthier kids' project has received a \$6000 grant from the IMB Foundation. This will pay for a limited number of bakeries to develop reduced fat baked products, have them tested, then approved for sale through the NSW Canteen Association.



Healthy Cities Illawarra and Illawarra Health have teamed up to work with local bakeries to create lower fat baked products including pies, sausage rolls and muffins. As many of these bakeries sell to school canteens it is hoped that the children will be purchasing lower fat and salt options than that which is currently available.



Community nutritionist for Illawarra Health, Julie Parkinson said, "Obesity has become a critical issue for children in Australia and this project will help to address a common source of fat intake in the diet of local children".

It is also hoped that local bakeries will be able to compete more effectively outside the region through promotion of their healthier products through the NSW Canteen Association.



Pictured from left: Frank Wallner, George Edgar (IMB Foundation) and Julie Parkinson

Healing at Hooka Park

Earlier this year we were delighted to receive great news that NSW Planning - Living Centres project would provide \$40,000 towards the development of a special place of healing and wellbeing at Hooka Park, Berkeley. Other financial and in-kind contributions are to be made by Wollongong City Council, Lake Illawarra Authority and Healthy Cities Illawarra. Other partners on the steering committee include the Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, Camp Quality, Illawarra Health – Cancer Care Centre.

A community artist /project coordinator will now be appointed and they will be responsible for conducting community consultations on the design of the area and then developing a masterplan for the area incorporating public art, seating, tree plantings etc. which all contain themes about healing and well-being.

It is hoped that the project will ignite interest from a range of business people and sponsors who will generously donate time and materials to this unique and interesting project.

In this issue...

- National Health Promotion Conference Page 6
- HCI AwardsPage 7
- Shoalhaven NewsPage 8
- Final Marinecare reportPage 10

and much more!

Vice President's Report

by *Dr Pat Mowbray*



World Environment Day Events

It was great to represent Healthy Cities Illawarra at the all day event at the Botanic Gardens and see the wonderful work carried out by Wollongong City Council staff with many schools from the local area. The theme of the day was 'Save the Planet' and it was presented in a number of fun but nevertheless effective ways. Both Shellharbour City and Kiama Councils also ran World Environment Day events – a credit to all concerned.

Annual Health Promotion Association Conference – Sydney, June 2002

At this conference attended by Frank Wallner and myself, I presented a Poster – "Health and Sustainability – A Region Moves Forward". The Poster showed the many organisations and sectors in the Illawarra region involved in the thrust towards gaining health through creating a cleaner, more innovative and greener environment. These organisations and sectors include local government e.g.

Wollongong Futures Consultation Process and the 2002 Environmental Plan of Wollongong City Council, Sustainable Earth Research Centre at Wollongong University, the contribution of TAFE, schools and the business and industrial sectors, community groups such as Healthy Cities Illawarra and Futureworld and environmental action and lobby groups.

I believe this concerted action by a region is rather unique and can only lead to greater health and employment and a more sustainable economy.

Futureworld Eco-Technology Centre

June has seen a number of events to support our environment. Dr Judy Messer, President, Futureworld, addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Wollongong University Alumni Association on sustainability with some fifty people attending. Assoc/Professor Sivakumar from Environmental Engineering and Judy addressed the "Business After Hours" June

function of the Illawarra Business Chamber at the Eco-Technology Centre with some ninety people attending.

The Annual Joint Seminar of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian College of Education and Alumni of the Faculty of Education was also held at the Eco-Technology Centre.

Stuart de Landre from the Killelea Field Studies Centre for schools spoke on how to get school students involved in practical ways to help the environment.

Michael Connor and other staff of the Wollongong Council performed a humorous but hard hitting play "Save the Planet" and Judy spoke on the environmental experience the Eco-Technology Centre could offer to schools.

A part-time Business Development Manager, Steve Higson has commenced at the Eco-Technology Centre which should be open to the public late this year.

Food Advertising to Kids – A Fair Go! is one of two projects run by the Advocacy Network on Food Advertising to Children (ANFAC).

ANFAC was created in 2000 from a Food Ads to Kids Action Group based at Noarlunga Health Service. ANFAC is a group of professionals representing the education and health sector.

This is an advocacy project that aims to enhance the health of Australian children by advocating for improvements to television food advertising directed at children.

The project is jointly funded by: The Department of Human Services (DHS) and Noarlunga Health Service, with considerable support from:

the Nutrition Department Adelaide Women's & Children's Hospital, Eat Well SA, Public Health Department Adelaide University, Playgroup Association of SA Inc and the Nutrition Unit Department of Public Health Flinders University of SA.

The project has been funded by DHS for 2 years (2001-2003). The project will primarily seek to lobby the Australian Broadcasting Authority to strengthen the implementation of the Children's Television Standards. The standards are intended to protect children against unfair marketing practices and public health opinion is that they are not applied with enough rigour. The project will engage relevant organisations and prominent individuals to work in partnership in undertaking advocacy strategies.





A Frank Comment

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINES -

social, financial and environmental outcomes

A 'triple bottom line' certainly sounds a painful condition and it may prove so for the corporate world. The current spate of corporate collapses and the revelations about unethical accounting practices have focussed our attention on the way companies report. The investment world is in panic as it emerges that many large corporations have been less than truthful about their financial bottom lines. It has led to renewed calls for greater ethical standards in company reporting and consideration of triple bottom line reporting. Many people believe that the triple bottom line approach will force companies to consider their social, environmental and financial responsibilities.

The benefit of triple bottom line reporting is that it creates an important shift in corporate culture about the way they see themselves in the world. Companies for too long have side-stepped social and environmental responsibilities by stating that their primary mission is the 'creation of shareholder value'. The creation of shareholder value through wanton disregard for environmental or social responsibility is now unacceptable. Investors still want to make money but many have been burned by corporate decisions that have destroyed forests, polluted waterways, dispossessed people of their land and transformed the social

fabric of communities in unacceptable ways. Investors then see highly paid executives having created this devastation walking away with a golden handshake.

Investors no longer believe that corporate greed (creation of shareholder value) alone is an acceptable way for companies to operate. As these current collapses are proving corporate greed alone is not creating shareholder value nor is it contributing to a better world.

Companies have sensed this shift in investors and the language that they are beginning to use in corporate documents reflects a desire for triple bottom line outcomes. Investors should remain sceptical about the triple bottom line 'spin' which we will be increasingly bombarded with in the next five years. Companies will need to back up their spin with policies, plans and actions which reflect a more mature approach to doing business in a world which demands acceptable social and environmental outcomes.

The Federal government recently released a report which reflected the triple bottom line approach as opposed to simply using the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the only worthy indicator of Australia's national well-being. The Australian Bureau of

Statistics report 'Measuring Australia's Progress' used 15 indicators (4 economic, 5 social and 6 environmental) and found that economically and socially Australia was progressing reasonably well. However, the environmental report card was poor. Loss of biodiversity, increased land clearing and degradation, water scarcity and increased greenhouse gas emissions are all identified as urgent problems.

In his excellent review of the report, Ross Gittins (Sydney Morning Herald, 2-6-02) considers that although these are significant issues the solutions are relatively inexpensive. The cost of mitigating the salinity problem is estimated at only \$700 million by the year 2020 which represents only 0.1 per cent of GDP today. Gittins notes that the problem is not the cost but getting ourselves organised politically to ensure that the budget gets directed to the part of our national report card that we are clearly under-performing on.

Triple bottom line reporting is not an end in itself. It is a process by which it is hoped corporations will begin to see themselves as having a broader responsibility for the welfare of the people and the place that they operate in.

by Frank Wallner, Manager

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

We would like to remind members that membership is now due for renewal. The new membership period will last from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003.

Your membership is important to us because it provides us with the support needed to create change aimed at improving the quality of life for everyone in the Illawarra.

Membership renewal forms will be posted out in the next few weeks.

Task Force News

Sexual Health Promotion

After 12 years of remarkable work, the HIV/AIDS Prevention Task Force has ultimately had a name change and with it comes a change of direction. Organisations such as Healthy Cities must constantly evaluate our direction to remain flexible and responsive to changes in our social environments.

HIV/AIDS has presented many challenges and changes to Australia and the world. We have been fortunate in Australia, that the brave steps taken early on, such as the needle and syringe program, education programs directed at risk behaviours, and more importantly the involvement, consultation, and support of affected communities and bipartisan political leadership, have ultimately paved the way for our successes in keeping the infection rate lowered. That is not to say everything is just rosy. Whilst the recent advent of combination therapies have turned what was generally considered a fatal illness, we are now talking in terms of people living with a chronic disease. However there are some shortcomings in this approach, many people do not suit treatment, or others may be concerned about current drug resistant mutations of the virus. These are still early days, no cure, and prevention being the best measure, means our work is not yet over.

However, for the past year it has proven increasingly difficult to engage other agencies in the work of the AIDS Task Force. It was generally felt that time would be better spent if the definitions of the task force were not limited to HIV/AIDS. Whilst it is still high on the agenda, and in prioritising other issues we are still promoting HIV preventative measures such as harm minimisation principles and safer sex, it was generally felt that the label of sexual health was more inclusive of all the issues.

Hence, the establishment of the Sexual Health Educators group. The group is still in early day formation, acquiring new members and defining principles of operation. We hope that this group will offer a sustainable networking function where partnerships can be established with projects developed and resources shared. Currently we are conducting a peer review of existing sexual health websites, so if you come across any, please let me know. The focus of the group is extremely broad so that agenda priorities change with needs.

I have been working on a project with a colleague from CHAIN (Community Health for Adolescents in Need) surveying the format and content of sexual health programs conducted in several local schools. An unpredicted outcome of this project has been that schools are now frequently seeking advice on resources and curriculum fulfilment, with extra speaking engagements being booked in.

In my other role as management member for Our Pathways Inc. (the local community centre for People living with HIV/AIDS), we are pleased to say that our move into a shared space and partnership with acon has proved to be very beneficial. With the new manager soon to commence at acon, we hope that this vital organisation that often deals with the cutting edge of society will continue to provide expertise and valued services.

Cheers, safe and happy sailing

annette

Aged Task Force

Planning is well underway for the "Time of Our Lives" Photographic Exhibition. To mark International Day for Older Persons, the exhibition will run from 29 October until 8 November in the Wollongong City Council foyer. The working party is very fortunate to have the expertise of local photographer Norman Melvin who is active with Wollongong Camera Club and University of the 3rd Age. Norm is giving invaluable assistance in the organisation of the exhibition. Also on the working party is Gillian Curtis without whose professional skills in media and public relations we could not do without.



We are calling on amateur photographers of all ages to submit photographs which portray older active local residents. Suitable entries will be exhibited and entrants will receive a Healthy Cities award of recognition. For entry forms contact the Healthy Cities office on 4226 5000.

Thanks to Dr Jim Turner, a computer has been purchased for use by the residents of Howard Court (Illawarra Retirement Trust). The computer will be available for internet and email access under a trial project that the task force is overseeing. Residents at Howard Court are very enthusiastic and thanks must go to Jan Rosen of the IRT who has worked hard to get the project underway. Training sessions will be made available to residents who require it and, once connected, the usage will be monitored for 12 months.

Linda Brazier

Child Injury Prevention (CIP) Task Force

Pools, pools and more pools. Since the last newsletter was distributed, we have come to know current pool safety legislation, regulations and Australian Standards inside out, upside down and back to front! The Healthy Cities team has also been kept more than busy dealing with no less than 9 partner organisations, (not to mention wrestling with ethics applications and funding firmly stuck in a pipeline), to get the Illawarra Pool Inspection Project set up and finally running.

We are all looking forward to gathering the information which will be generated by the

project, as it should create a clear picture of the way three local councils manage their pool inspection programs, as well as pool owners' opinions of inspections and baseline levels of compliance of pools, with current safety requirements.

The other issue currently of interest to the task force, is use of protective gear (helmets, wristguards, elbowpads, or kneepads) by young people whilst skateboarding, rollerblading and riding scooters.

Observations were conducted at skate park facilities across the region during the

April school holidays. It was alarming, but not unexpected, to confirm that virtually no young people at any of the facilities wore any protective gear AT ALL.

At the last task force meeting, some task force members expressed an interest in getting together to discuss ways of tackling this injury problem locally. Since local skate parks are council facilities and most of the young people skate/ride on local roads, it's expected that local councils and the RTA will be invited to join in further discussions.

Katherine van Weerdenburg

Breakfast Programs

Our breakfast programs just keep on expanding! Two new programs have started recently taking to ten the total number of programs we support with a grant from the Casino Community Benefit Fund.

The most recent to start is at Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre under the coordination of Wendy Constantine and Jackie Roberts, the Aboriginal Liaison officer based at Berkeley High School. The program will fulfil a real need in that area as it will especially target young Aboriginal students from both the local primary and high schools.

A program also started at Lake Illawarra South Public School in term 2 this year. Dianne Woods is a committed parent who gained the support of the school principal and the P&C before approaching Healthy Cities for assistance. The program runs two days per week in the school canteen solely through the work of volunteers. Some teachers at the school are keenly supporting the program by targeting specific children and they are already seeing positive results in the classroom.

The All Ages Program at Dapto, based at the new Ribbonwood Centre, is also seeing an expansion in numbers. The program will begin operating an hour earlier for a trial period in an effort to target children from the local primary and high schools. This program is very well coordinated by Lucy Papolim and Belinda Thompson who have a great team of volunteers.

An interim report for the Casino Community Benefit Fund was prepared in May by our volunteer project officer, Lesley Hare. Lesley conducted comprehensive interviews with all breakfast program coordinators and compiled an excellent report. Anyone wanting a copy can contact our office on 4226 5000.

The Illawarra Zero harm Initiative (IZHI)

Zero Harm has just completed a series of television ads that promote safety at work, home and play. PRIME TV has been a stalwart supporter of IZHI and continues to sponsor the production of the ads. You may have noticed ads depicting possible accident scenes as well as positive messages about prevention. The central theme has been about 'making a lifestyle choice' in relation to safety in a variety of environments. The ads have been running during prime television time and are attracting attention from a range of viewers. The ads are part of a three-phase program including awareness raising, a youth safety summit and an eventual prevocational youth safety project.

The ads will be complemented by a competition inviting students in years 9, 10 and 11 to submit their thoughts on the topic 'Safety - it's no accident' (this commenced at the end of June). IZHI has asked students to relate a past real or imagined unintentional accident experience in one of five different categories - short story/ poem, radio skit, video, photographic or disk form, and what they learnt from it. The categories each carry a \$50.00 student prize and \$600.00 school voucher prize. The competition has been generously sponsored by K & R Fabrications, Shellharbour Roofing Service, Allied, ASMS and Harvey Norman Computers and Communications.

IZHI's next project is very much dependent upon a successful grant application to Work Cover NSW. The grant application will be based on one of the key issues identified by delegates at the Zero Harm Forum held in 2001 - youth safety in the work place. There has been general consensus that Illawarra lacks specific and relatable safety programs for this age group, and based on several 'think tanks' since the forum, the Zero Harm Team will submit a funding request to WorkCover NSW. The aim is to secure funds to allow for the planning and development of a long-term secondary school based safety program. The actual program is presently 'evolving' and we hope to have a program outline available for the next newsletter (as well as news of a successful grant application!).

The key partners for the Illawarra Zero Harm Initiative continue to be Healthy Cities Illawarra, BHP Steel, K & R Fabrications and WorkCover NSW.

ILLAWARRA Injury Audit

A final draft of the Illawarra Injury Audit Report is now in the hands of the Division of Population Health and Planning. The report will be available as soon as it has been officially accepted by Illawarra Health (IH). There have been some interesting findings as well as some predictable ones, however, readers will have to wait for the 'green light' from IH before a review appears in 'Better Health for All'. When published, copies of the report will be available from Healthy Cities.

First Aid Awareness



Recently, we were approached by a community member for help to develop her idea for a first aid education game. The aim of the game would be to increase awareness among parents, as well as children, of basic first aid actions in the event of an injury. After referring her to Kidsafe NSW, and meeting with Jennifer Duncholme, we are assisting her to write a proposal for Kidsafe, to take the idea to the next stage.

NATIONAL Health Promotion Conference

The conference is enormously broad covering the full range of health promotion such as tobacco control, injury, indigenous health, mental health etc. Although there was some discussion on the environment and its impact on health this was not a strong theme at this conference.

The keynote papers were presented by Professor Lawrence Green, Sir Michael Marmot (video), Eva Cox and Professor Don Nutbeam. These were all of course of a high standard and interesting without perhaps evoking any real passion. The social determinants of health were thoroughly discussed by Michael Marmot and Don Nutbeam in particular reference to policy development in Britain. Marmot showed some good evidence showing how educational status, income level is highly correlated with rates of heart disease and cancer. Don Nutbeam commented that we now have good evidence describing the relationships between the social determinants of health but we need to see very different approaches to public policy which could effectively impact on the fact that the most disadvantaged in our society suffer the worst health. One of the ongoing policy debates is whether health promotion should be focussed on achieving larger improvements in those most at risk (the disadvantaged) or to take a population approach by trying to achieve small changes in social conditions for all people so that the population as a whole becomes healthier.

The Atcheson Report is Britain's major report into inequality and health and is available via the internet. Healthy Cities also has a copy of the video presentation by Sir Michael Marmot.



2002 Healthy Cities Annual Award Presentation

The 13th annual Healthy Cities Illawarra awards were once again an outstanding success with 55 individuals and community groups being recognised for their hard work and commitment during the past year.

The gala presentation took place at the Novotel Northbeach and we are extremely grateful for their sponsorship again this year.

Awards were presented by Healthy Cities management committee representatives and Wollongong's Lord Mayor, George Harrison. Wollongong High School's Jazz Band provided outstanding entertainment throughout the morning.

Nominations are open for next year's awards and nomination forms are available from the Healthy Cities office.

Congratulations to all award recipients!



Mr Frank Wallner presenting awards to recipients in the category of Environment, Heritage and Culture



Dr Irene Kreis presenting awards to recipients in the category of Fundraising to Assist Children's Organisations



Clr Leon Cicolini presenting awards to recipients in the category of Fundraising



Mr Frank Wallner presenting awards to recipients in the category of Environment, Heritage and Culture



Dr Irene Kreis presenting awards to recipients in the category of Fundraising to Assist Children's Organisations

The Award Winners

Fundraising Awards: St John Ambulance Kiama, The Chamberlain Family, Kiama Woodcraft Group, Illawarra Melanoma Foundation, Country Women's Association of NSW Dapto Branch, Bakers Delight - Kiama, Warilla, Corrimal and Dapto, Shellharbour Public Hospital Auxiliary, West Wollongong Rotary Club.

Volunteer Awards: Students from the autobody refinishing section at the TAFE Illawarra Institute, Ted and Liz Evans, Judy Mallon, Unanderra Community Centre's Seniors Activity Group, Illawarra Quilters Club, Rene Clark, Edna Hassan, Tech-Warratah Rugby Union team, Jim Wallace and Carol Williams.

Fundraising to Assist Children's Organisations Awards: Illawarra Cycle Club Members, Wollongong Golf Club Ladies Associates, Bulli Rotary Club, Wollongong City Employment and Training Work for the Dole participants, Wollongong Senior Firefighter Graham Medcalf and members of Wollongong & Albion Park fire crews, Bellambi Ladies Bowling Club, Technical Aid to the Disabled, Illawarra Bike Riders and Tourers, Stephanie Power and Family, Westfield Warrawong and Figtree and Wave FM.

Community Service Awards: Gerringong Lions Club, Illawarra Seniors Band, Wal's Pharmacy, Asbestos Support Group, Kiama Men's Probus Choir, The King Family, Wollongong Rotary Club, Minnamurra Lions Club, Jim Bradley, Balarang Public School, Audrey Walsh, WEA Illawarra.

Environment, Heritage and Culture Awards: Berkeley Pioneer Cemetery Restoration Group, Oak Flats High School, Mt St Thomas Public School, Mt Kembla Public School, Barry Hennessy, Oak Flats Chamber of Commerce, Mitch Orchard - Recycling for Adolescents in Need (RAIN), Kara Izzard, Kemblawarra Public School, Parameadows SSP.



Clr Sandra McCarthy presenting awards to recipients in the category of Community Service

NEWS FROM THE SHOALHAVEN

Land Management Partnerships, including five fabulous years of Bitou control

There are now five projects underway, which significantly contribute to protective and restorative land management activities in Shoalhaven. All contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity through community education, visitor access and on ground works.

- 1. The Holiday Haven Coastal Reserves Project:** with funding from Holiday Haven Tourist Parks and Coastcare, this project focuses on coastal reserves around four tourist parks at Shoalhaven Heads, Crookhaven Heads, Bendalong Point and Ulladulla Headland. Currently there are two bush regeneration companies sharing work at all four sites dealing with a multitude of weeds and Bushcare groups have been established at two sites. Holiday Haven have committed funds to the project up to 2004.
- 2. Southern Shoalhaven Bitou Bush Control Program:** On July 24 a special steering committee meeting was held at Booderee National Park. This was an opportunity to tell the fabulous five year story of the project and review our achievements – which are considerable, and to look at the future of Bitou control in Shoalhaven.

The three main reasons for success are: the friendly and effective interagency co operation involving National Parks and Wildlife Service, Shoalhaven City Council, Coastcare and Environment Australia ie. Booderee National Park; the spectacular volunteer effort involving five Bushcare Groups; the expert, efficient and energetic project officer – Kerry Thompson. Healthy Cities will now hand the project over to Shoalhaven City Council.

- 3. Bannister Point Littoral Rainforest Restoration Project:** Healthy Cities is now assisting the Bannister Point Bushcare Group to expand their project in Mollymook. Since 1996, the group has been quietly removing the many weed species that have invaded this rare habitat. The forest is listed as a SEPP 26 – State Environmental Planning Policy relating to Littoral (near the sea) Rainforests. This year, with Coastcare funding, we have engaged bush regeneration contractors to tackle the huge Mirror Bush invasion and repair erosion.
- 4. One Track For All:** Noel Butler's vision is almost complete with just a couple more carvings to be done to complete the cultural story that the 80 carvings tell and to complete the five year story of the project. During NAIDOC Week, at the invitation of Environment Australia, several of Noel's carvings were displayed in the foyer of the Canberra offices, including one we 'borrowed' from the track. When the right person is found to open the track, it will be officially launched with a very special celebration.
- 5. Southern Shoalhaven Coastwalk:** the final draft of the booklet is now with the printer and it's hoped that this long awaited and excellent resource will be available by the end of September. The booklet is a guide to approximately 40 kms of coast from Narrawallee Inlet to Merry Beach and includes maps, feature walks, interpretive information and directions to link the many short walks which are scattered along the coast and combine them into a comprehensive walking trail.

Between them, these projects support three different bush regeneration contract teams, ten Bushcare groups, and three project officers.

ILLAWARRA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

RADIONUCLIDE Investigation

The network has met twice over the past few months and has been well attended by a range of community members. In April Mr Mark O'Donnell from the University of Wollongong gave a talk on the water quality of local creeks and estuaries. He presented data from about 60 sites which were included in a study conducted over the past two years. The news generally was not good for our local inland waterways. Some of the sites were extremely polluted and would clearly be hazardous to human health if people swam or ingested water from these places. This poor report card was also restated in the recently released Wollongong City Council State of the Environment report which states that "Water quality in streams, coastal lagoons and wetlands in the Wollongong LGA is generally poor and usually does not meet the ANZECC & ARMCANZ(2000) guidelines...". Healthy Cities Illawarra has suggested that WCC convenes a task force comprising all relevant stakeholders to establish a strategy to address this pressing and serious problem.

In July, the network enjoyed a presentation from Professor Bernard Stewart, Head of Cancer Control for South Eastern Sydney Health. Professor Stewart spoke about the use of high tech analysis of genes for environmental causes of cancer. He specifically referred to his work on samples of tissue from the victims of the Illawarra Leukemia cluster. In this work Professor Stewart was interested in seeing if any mutation of the P53 gene had occurred which may indicate an environmental cause for the leukemia. Unfortunately, the results did not show any such mutation.

The majority of samples of air, soil, vegetation and water are currently being analysed by ANSTO. A few remaining samples are still to be taken including fish, drinking water and gamma measurements at a number of sites which have slag or coal wash emplacements.

The committee is still hopeful that the investigation will be completed on schedule with a final report being available in October 2002. The investigation has been a very different process with community representatives comprising the majority of the steering committee and being involved in all decisions relating to the successful completion of the investigation.

Our Environment

DIOXIN Success

A campaign conducted by Healthy Cities Illawarra to obtain the release of a report into ambient levels of dioxins has been successful. In June, the EPA finally released an executive summary of a report entitled Ambient Air Quality Research Project (1996-2001) – Dioxins, Organics, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons and Heavy Metals. The study covered a number of important air toxics although HCl was particularly

interested in the results for dioxins as a result of the Dioxin Action Campaign. The data from three locations across NSW including Warrawong showed extremely low levels of dioxin ranging from 40-320 femtograms per cubic metre (fg/m³). The report shows that levels from country NSW are considerably lower than those in urban areas. It is important that the EPA continues to ensure that industrial and domestic sources of dioxins continue to be monitored and, where necessary, compliance with the most rigorous international standards maintained. Because dioxins persist in the environment we must continue to be alert to the accumulation of these substances in the environment. Achieving zero output

must remain the ultimate goal in Australia if we are to avoid the bio-accumulation of these toxic and harmful substances.

Copies of the EPA report are available on the website www.epa.nsw.gov.au



Multicultural **M**ARINECARE Project

After commencing in 1999 and receiving around \$40,000 in funding from Coastcare, this project has finally come to an end. Marinecare has aimed to teach people about protecting our coastal habitats and appreciating the marine environment by giving hands on experiences. Through guided walks on rock platforms groups have learnt to identify marine animals and plants. Many have also learnt about safe and responsible fishing and snorkelling by taking part in organised, supervised activities.

Over 500 people, with ages ranging from 5 to 75 years, have participated in a variety of activities during stage 2 of the project. A total of twelve bi-lingual facilitators from six different non-English speaking communities worked on the project, the communities being Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Serbian, Spanish and Italian.

In addition to the 31 field trips and outdoor "workshops" organised, with the help of 2 VOX FM a number of short recordings were made for radio along the themes of beach combing, recreational fishing and safe rock fishing. These were used in specific language programs and a radio quiz based on the information has been running over the last four months.

A number of focus groups were held to get feedback about the program from a range of people who had participated. The information was overwhelmingly positive with people reporting that they had a greater appreciation for marine life. There have even been some long lasting outcomes such as the Vietnamese group who now take part in Clean Up Australia Day at a local beach under the coordination of multicultural health worker Quan Tran. (see photos top left and below)

The success of Marinecare has been due largely to the excellent partnership we have had with the Illawarra Area Health Service Multicultural Health Unit and in particular, Nieves Oliver of the Health Promotion Unit. In addition, the professional support of NSW Fisheries officers and local Coastcare coordinators has been invaluable. Our bi-lingual facilitators have worked with dedication and enthusiasm throughout the project and, if they weren't already, they are now committed environmentalists! A full report is being prepared for Coastcare and a few extra copies will be available by the end of August for anyone interested.



Healthy Cities Illawarra is hosting a student from the Kalamazoo College, Michigan as part of an International exchange. Jenny Sullivan will be involved in a research project which investigates the Australian approach to reducing HIV/AIDS and then comparing it with policy and program approaches in the US. Jenny will be reviewing Australian policy, conducting interviews with service providers and also conducting a survey which examines University students' knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS.

"Australia has achieved one of the lowest rates of transmission and it will be interesting to analyse what have been the factors for this success" Ms Sullivan said.

"I will also be returning to the US to conduct a similar survey of University students and it will be interesting to compare levels of understanding about the disease" she added.



Better Health for All

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