



Coastwatchers

Eurobodalla's environment group

18 April 2017

New Rabbit Virus Released in Eurobodalla

A new Korean strain of calicivirus virus has been released across the Eurobodalla Shire, and will hopefully result in a dramatic reduction in wild rabbits.



This new strain of calicivirus is highly contagious, and can kill rabbits within 24 hours. It is spread by flies, when the flies are attracted to dying rabbits. Those flies then carry that virus into the healthy rabbit population.

The release of this new strain is expected to be successful in the Eurobodalla because the climate is cool, and wet. When the original strain of calicivirus was released in 1996 in Eurobodalla, it had an initial impact then waned as resistance within the rabbit population built.

The new strain is more contagious and has been released in a coordinated plan. The 1996 release was undermined when some locals released the virus into the region unlawfully, reducing the impact from a coordinated release.

Rabbits nationally are Australia's worst vertebrate pest species, causing up to \$200 million in lost agricultural production and contributing to the destruction of native vegetation.

The Eurobodalla Council will follow the re-introduction of the calicivirus with contract shooters to target remaining rabbits. These shooters operate during the nights with telescopic air rifles and night vision equipment. Safety is a key consideration.

It is hoped that the rabbit population is significantly reduced especially in hotspots like Durras and Broulee. This will assist with the regeneration of Landcare plantings as well as protecting remnant dune plant species.

New CEO Appointed to the Australian Electricity Marketing Organisation

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) recently appointed (March 2017) Audrey Zibelman, an American, as its new CEO.

Zibelman was one of the leaders of New York's "Reforming the Energy Vision", following the 2012 Hurricane Sandy, in which thousands of New York residents were left without power for weeks.

The Reforms increased energy security, through a range of measures including smart grid technology, battery storage and distributed generation, strategically placed throughout its network.

This appointment could signal the

biggest shift in culture and technology of the AEMO, which is responsible for the operation of Australia's mains grid. It also comes at a time when the Finkel Review is only months away from reporting.



The AEMO has been criticised for its slow responses to adapting policy to renewable energy and other new technologies. This was highlighted after the South Australian blackout when renewables were blamed for the problem. Within a week AEMO required new standards be introduced throughout Australia, which would avoid wind-farms automatically turning off early. The technology had been in use in Europe for over a decade!

For those members wanting more information, listen to an interview between Audrey Zibelman and Geraldine Doogue on ABC Radio National on Saturday 1 April 2015.

<https://radio.abc.net.au/programitem/pgPG9LeZ27?play=true>

Eurobodalla Shire Catbib Program

Roaming domestic cats are a significant conservation issue because they may hunt, harass and compete with wildlife. Their hunting activities include impacting birds, lizards, frogs and many

native mammals including bandicoots and gliders in the Eurobodalla. There are also concerns about unrestrained roaming domestic cats because of risks to cat welfare, including cats fighting and getting injured.

Due to the threat that domestic cats pose to wildlife, Eurobodalla Shire Council is implementing a proactive program to reduce domestic cat predation on native animals. This program will support cat owners to minimise the impacts that domestic cat predation has on the local wildlife.

What is the Program

Eurobodalla Shire Council is offering a free CatBib to all cat owners who have a microchipped and registered cat(s) in eligible areas.



Where are the Eligible Areas?

All cat owners living in these areas are entitled to a free CatBib:

Bimbimbie, Bergalia, Bingie, Broulee, Congo, Deua River Valley, Guerilla Bay, Lilli Pilli, Maloney's Beach, Meringo,

Moruya Heads, Mossy Point, MysteryBay, Nelligen, Potato Point, Rosedale, Runnyford, South Durras.

Why These Areas

These villages and hamlets have been specifically selected as it is where the greatest number of native wildlife live and is therefore the initial priority of this program.

Why a Catbib and Not a Collar with a Bell?

Murdoch University Research has scientifically proven that CatBibs work to stop over 80% of cats from catching birds and reduce small animal predation by almost half. The CatBib acts as a barrier between the cat and its prey. When the cat pounces, the bib gets in the way, which allows the split second needed for escape. It also serves as a brightly coloured visual warning as the cat creeps up on its victim.

How does it Work?

The CatBib is attached to the cat's collar and hangs loosely over the cat's chest. It works by gently interfering with the precise timing, and coordination a cat needs for successful bird catching. The CatBib comes between the cat and the bird just at the last moment. It doesn't interfere with any of the cat's other activities. The CatBib only affects the cat's ability to catch birds (and reduces cats from fighting). A cat wearing a CatBib can run, jump, climb trees, eat, sleep, scratch and groom.

How do I get a Free Catbib?

If you are interested in receiving a free CatBib and would like further information about the program and eligibility, please contact Courtney Fink-Downes at Eurobodalla Shire Council on (02) 4474 7493.

The Coastwatchers Association Inc.
www.coastwatchers.or.au
coastwatchers.committee@gmail.com

The Invasive Cassia Weed (*Senna pendula* var. *glabrata*)

Many Landcare volunteers in the Eurobodalla Shire have been targeting the invasive weed Cassia in the past few weeks. The flowers are bright yellow, so they are very conspicuous. If you have them in the garden or bush please remove them.



Cassia will very quickly invade native ecosystems particularly in coastal areas. It is a very fast growing plant that can suppress the growth of native species and displace them. Cassia produces large quantities of long living seed pods.



Cassia invades waterways, gardens, disturbed sites, waste areas, roadsides, closed forests, forest margins and urban bushland. Most Landcare groups prioritise this invasive weed.

Dargues Reef Mine Set to Commence Mining

After nearly two and a half years of inquiries and approvals the Dargues Reef Gold Mine will shortly commence operation.



The timeline of events for the approval process was as follows. As you will see it commenced in November 2014 and as at April 2017 is not entirely complete.

Note the EPBC Act 1999, refers to the Commonwealth Government's Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

11/2014 Press reports indicate Unity Mining was seeking to modify its 2011 DA approval and process on site using cyanide.

01/2015 Unity Mining submits Modification 3 to DA provided to NSW Government for preliminary comment

24/02/15 Coastwatchers makes Presentation to ESC

09/07/15 Unity Mining's DA Mod 3 placed on Public Exhibition by NSW Planning for 6 weeks

25/08/15 Coastwatchers makes further Presentation to ESC

26/08/15 Close of Public Exhibition for Mod. 3. Coastwatchers lodges submission with NSW Planning

04/09/15 Coastwatchers lodges 1st submission with Commonwealth Department of Environment re

endangered species under EPBC Act 1999

27/10/15 Commonwealth Determination gives Approval under EPBC Act 1999

15/11/15 Unity Responds to NSW Planning Public Submissions and at the same timewithdraws on site processing using cyanide.

01/12/15 Public Exhibition of Unity Response

09/12/15 Takeover proposal by PYBAR and Diversified Minerals of Unity Mining

03/01/16 Close of Public Exhibition re Unity's Response. Coastwatchers lodges Submission with NSW Planning

22/06/16 NSW Planning makes Determination to refer matter to the NSW Planning Assessment Commission

26/07/16 Planning Assessment Hearing in Braidwood. Coastwatchers makes Presentation

10/08/16 Planning Assessment Commission Determines an Approval for the Project

17/08/16 Coastwatchers lodge 2nd Submission to Commonwealth Department of Environment re endangered species under EPBC Act 1999

17/02/17 Commonwealth issues Determination of Conditional Approval under EPBC Act. The conditions are that the mine proponent's must prepare a **Construction Environmental Management Plan** and a **Water Management Plan**.

The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment is yet to give final approval under the EPBC Act to these two Plans.

Work cannot proceed until these Plans have been approved. The Association wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, requesting the Plans be placed on public exhibition when finalised.

All the Coastwatchers submissions and presentations are on the Coastwatchers Website in the Archives.

Under NSW Planning legislation there has to be a Dargues Reef Mine Community Consultative Committee. It has been operating for many years.

Membership has been reviewed by the independent Chairman of the CCC and the NSW Minister for Planning and Coastwatchers Secretary Richard Roberts has been appointed as an environmental representative on the CCC.

Coastwatchers AGM Preliminary Date - Saturday 23 September 2017

For those members who plan ahead, the Executive is planning to hold the Annual General Meeting later this year on Saturday 23 September at 2.00pm at the Tomakin Community Hall. This will be finalised at the next Committee meeting in early July 2017.

The Committee is also considering holding a Special General Meeting after the AGM to formerly adopt the new NSW Model Rules, which NSW Fair Trading introduced in August 2016.

Solar panel installations 'skyrocket' in Australia in March

This is an edited report by the ABC's consumer affairs reporter [Amy Bainbridge](#) from ABC News on 13 April 2017

Key points:

- **Solar panels were installed on about 15,000 homes and businesses in March 2017,**
- **Installations have hit their highest level in almost five years,**
- **Experts say rising electricity bills and recent blackouts in SA are turning people to solar.**

There has been a big surge in the number of households installing solar panels, with March installations reaching their highest level in almost five years.



An energy consultant said 91 megawatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems were installed during the month.

He said the surge started to build in 2016, and has continued to skyrocket in 2017

Queensland led the way, installing 25 megawatts of capacity, which is enough to power about 5,500 homes and businesses.

Installations were also up in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

Installation figures in Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT were flat.

The recent blackouts in South Australia were a factor in the rising demand for panels, as solar power and storage are used to offset or protect against grid blackouts.

Wharf Road Coastal Zone Management Plan Back For Final Certification with Minister

The submerged and tidal land at Wharf Road Batemans Bay (400 meters from the bridge) has indirectly and directly, been on Council Agendas for over 30 years. It is shortly to be progressed when the NSW Minister for Planning and Environment Certifies the Council's 'Wharf Road Coastal Zone Management Plan'.

This decision will have implications into the future, both with the surrounding land in Wharf Road, and other land in this Shire and elsewhere, particularly if global warming leads to sea level rise.

In supporting the Plan, the Minister said that the Plan seeks to return this precinct to public ownership and restore unimpeded public beach and foreshore access to these margins, which will be of significant benefit to the local community.

Key Dates

29 November 1994 Land and Environment Court NSW, Environment Protection Authority v Eric Saunders and Leaghur Holdings Pty Ltd, 1994,187

2011 NSW Minister for Environment identifies the Wharf Road area as a "hot spot" under the *Coastal Protection Act 1979* and Directs that a **Coastal Zone Management Plan** be developed

February 2012 Emergency Action Subplan for the Wharf Road Coastal Erosion 'Hot-spot' prepared by consultants.

28 June 2016 Council adopts **Wharf Road Coastal Zone Management Plan** and forwards to the Minister for Planning and Environment for Certification

Minister seeks advice of Expert Coastal Panel
23 October 2016 Minister refers Plan back to Council for minor amendment

22 November 2016 Council refers amended Plan back to the Minister for final Certification

The Council report in November 2016 on the Wharf Road CZMP indicates that the land at Wharf Road is highly constrained by natural hazards and is not suitable for the purpose of development. The land is zoned E2 under the Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan (ELEP) 2012 as a reflection of these constraints.

In considering the natural constraints and zoning of the land, the Wharf Road Plan forwarded to the Minister on 30 June 2016, recommended the following actions:

1. Make an application for the purchase of tidal and sub-tidal private properties and beaches at Wharf Road
2. Investigate options for the relocation or improved protection of water and sewer mains
3. Improve public access, weed and rubbish removal
4. Incorporate incomplete actions into the Eurobodalla Coastal Management Program and
5. Review Plan or incorporate into the Eurobodalla Coastal Management Program in accordance with legislation.

The Minister and the Expert Coastal Panel required revision to Action 1. (above) asking the Council to remove any reference to the purchase of submerged land given the precedent of the 1994 Saunders Land and Environment Court judgment (see Key Dates). The Expert Coastal Panel said that the Saunders precedent "...offer the view that submerged lands automatically revert to the Crown and therefore are not required to be acquired...".

The ESC's Coast and Environment Management Advisory Committee (CEMAC) considered the acquisition and ownership of land due to ambulatory boundaries. Some on the CEMAC argued that Council was setting a precedent over the Wharf Road land if no acquisition was made, but what these members failed to appreciate was the precedent had already been created in the Saunders case in 1994. Until a case is taken to a higher court or legislation is introduced into the NSW Parliament reversing this position, then the Saunders case is the legal basis to have such lands automatically revert to the Crown.

The Council made the recommended amendment plus some other minor changes. The panel also made two additional suggestions to improve the Plan and anticipated outcomes. These suggestions were:

1. It is noted that the area the subject of the Plan has a long history involving several court proceedings that are prominent in the NSW coastal case law. There might be benefit in providing a small appendix that lists or captures this relevant information, and

2. It is recommended the Plan goes a step further in describing actions that could be undertaken once the relevant private landholdings have been acquired including removal of building stock and restoration of the land.

Council should also consider removal of the groyne structure that currently prevents unimpeded access along the foreshore. This will have the added benefit of providing rock armour that could be recycled to facilitate necessary protection of threatened infrastructure at the road corner. The requested changes were included in the revised Wharf Road Plan.

The Council is to liaise with NSW Land and Property, to have the title of the

submerged lands revert to the Crown. When the NSW Government obtains title to these lands, it is likely the Eurobodalla Council will be responsible for ongoing management and maintenance of these Crown Lands on behalf of the NSW Government.

Following Certification, the Council intends to apply to the NSW Coastal Management Program to obtain funds to acquire land remaining in private ownership.

Implementation of some actions from the Wharf Road Coastal Zone Management Plan will require an initial financial commitment from Council. However, grant funding is available to implement actions from a Certified Plan. No actions will occur until sufficient grant funding has been secured.

Huge 300MW solar farm begins construction near Port Augusta

By Giles Parkinson on 11 April 2017 in Renew Economy

The first two stage of a 300MW solar farm – Australia's biggest – has begun construction near Port Augusta in South Australia.

The first two stages, totalling 220MW, of the Bungala project is being built around 12kms from Port Augusta, where the state's last coal fired generator closed last May.

Bungala will be built "battery storage ready", and will also likely be the first major solar farm to participate in Australia's FCAS market (frequency control and ancillary services), using SMA inverter technology to provide voltage control for the grid.