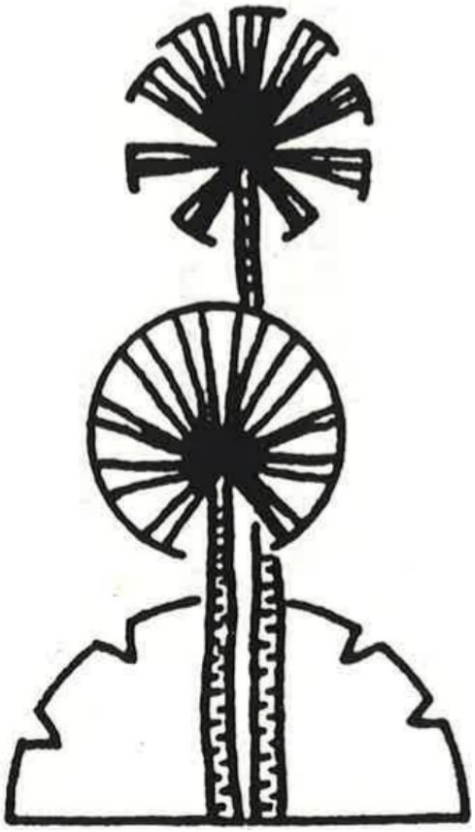
A HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Ettymalong Creek Landcare



Ettymalong lagoon, Iluka lagoon, Kahibah Lagoons,
Ettymalong creek, Kahibah creek and Iluka creek

Established 1994

Modern edition, re-typeset from the digital original (v3) · 2026

About this edition

This is a re-typeset edition of *History of Ettymalong Creek Landcare* (version 3), a Word document by the Ettymalong Creek Landcare group. The text is taken directly from the digital original, so no OCR was involved, and it is reproduced as written, including its spelling and emphasis.

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p.1 The story of the protection and rehabilitation of the creeks and lagoons of Umina is a story of over 30 years strong community action and advocacy.

- resident action saved Iluka Lagoon from development
- saved Ettymalong creek and its networks from being turned into concrete channels
- lobbied and advocated to change destructive creek "maintenance" practices such as poisoning and dredging.
- contributed thousands of hours of volunteer bush regeneration and native plant propagation work
- through its advocacy work, ensured that compensatory planting took place throughout the creek network in 2003 when a significant number of mature trees removed by Council from around the creeks on Pearl Beach estate for flood mitigation purposes.

Historically, protection of the creeks and adjacent bushland areas has been very problematic because they are zoned as drainage reserves rather than nature reserves.

Some Key Points in the History of Community Action

Early 1980's resident action opposed to the filling and development of Iluka Lagoon resulted in the developer contributing the lagoon to Council as the open space component related to the development application (DA) for the nearby residential development.

1987 – onwards Residents formed the **Umina Nature Defence Organisation (UNDO)**.

This group was a very strong lobbying and advocacy group for 10 years around all issues associated with protecting the creek and lagoon network, including taking action in the Land and Environment Court.

1994 – Ettymalong Creek Landcare was established. – this group built on the UNDO group's work with some of its members establishing the new Landcare group.

The vision of this group was for the community and Council to begin managing the local creek and lagoon environment using bushcare techniques and for the community to increase its understanding of the environmental value of these assets.

The focus of the landcare group was to:

a) proactively demonstrate how the bush can be cared for, and degraded areas could be rehabilitated using bush regeneration methods and

b) change Council maintenance practices to more sustainable environmentally appropriate ones.

p.2 A major obstacle to this was the fact that the creeks are zoned drainage areas and are under the control of Council engineers rather than environmental officers.

Ettymalong Creek Landcare Works and Activities Undertaken

1994 Instrumental in getting the first Council management plan for the area *The Kahibah, Iluka and Ettalong Creeks, Kahibah and Iluka lagoons, and selected reserves at Umina Beach Rehabilitation and Management Plan 1994* to include the whole creek and lagoon networks and a bushland rehabilitation focus. The landcare group wrote the brief for the Council tender which was won by Shortland Wetlands Centre (SWC) Wetlands and Ecological Management Consultancy. This Plan became the focus of

all subsequent work in the area and enabled the Landcare group to seek and obtain state government funding for some works.

1995 the Landcare Group received state government funding under the NSW government's Rivers Reborn funding program to begin implementing the management plan and to undertake primary weeding, major rubbish removal and community education for the Billabong area.

1995–2006 – The Ettymalong Creek Landcare group has:

- held monthly work days undertaking bush regeneration work
- brought over $100,000 in funding to the area for bush regeneration works and the installation of signs and bollards to prevent mowing of the bush areas.
- Hosted Greencorps and work for the dole work days
- Held many Community planting and community education days
- Held a wide range of community education activities.
- Helped local schools propagate and plant native plants for the area.
- Planted and propagated over 10,000 native plants from local provenance with a particular focus on Eucalyptus robusta.
- Lobbied local, state and federal government about issues of relevance to protection the creeks and environs.
- Actively used every piece of environmental legislation and policy to achieve local improvements.

Change of Council Practice

Thousands of hours have been spent by group members lobbying Council to change destructive engineering practices used in the site area to environmentally sustainable ones. The elected Council has by enlarge, supported the community and overturned many engineering recommendations. Landcare group members have been instrumental in changing Council practice. These changed practices include:

- Recognising the creeks as environmental assets rather than just drainage channels.
- Using bush regeneration methods (*rather than mowing, clearing using heavy machinery in sensitive areas, spraying and dredging*) to maintain and rehabilitate the creek and lagoon environs.
- Stopping mowing of native bush land areas – Council policy now prevents this and bollards have been installed in some areas to prevent incursions.

p.3

- Prevented concrete (or rock) lining of much of creek network. (For previous practice – see Neera Rd concrete channel)
- Changed practice of clear felling of vegetation along creek network. Lack of shade had led to massive weed growth within the water body. Revegetation is now being actively carried out and maintained by Council to provide shade and reduce weed growth within the creeks.
- Dredging creeks – in the main have stopped the adhoc and destructive practice of dredging.
- Convinced the elected Council to use cutting and drowning and cut and paint methods of removing typha – rather than wide spread spraying and dredging which was recommended by their engineers.

- Pioneered the mulching of Coral tree waste and use on site – rather than removal to tip – demonstrated coral tree wood chips did not lead to regrowth.

Bush Regeneration work being carried out by Council along the creek network – Kahibah Creek Project

In 2003, in response to Council's proposal to remove over 490 native trees including 169 Eucalyptus robusta (swamp mahogany) trees from around North Pearl estate, the Landcare Group lobbied, advocated and worked closely with National Parks and Wildlife and Environment Australia (Federal Government) to document the importance of the native vegetation and the endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna in this local area including the swift parrot, regent honey eater and grey headed flying fox.

At the time, Council's environmental assessment submitted to the Commonwealth, argued that their proposed works would not have a significant impact on Commonwealth listed endangered and vulnerable species and that their proposals did not require a Federal license or conditions.

The Landcare Group's submissions argued that the impact was significant and that the license conditions must include provision that replacement planting occur **prior to** any removal of vegetation and that there be ongoing maintenance, monitoring and reporting of progress. **Environment Australia's final decision and license conditions reflected the Landcare Group's detailed submission**. The license conditions required, amongst other things that Council undertake significant compensatory plantings and maintain those plantings until maturity. It is these plantings that are now to be seen successfully established along the Kahibah creek network.

We believe that the activism, dedication and knowledge of our local community that has led to the significantly improved practice that you will see today.

2006 – 2020

The Landcare group has continued to hold monthly workdays of the site and is gradually rehabilitating some of the more degraded area.