

MEDIA RELEASE

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LAKE TOPS LIST OF COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The environmental health of Lake Macquarie is the most important issue on the current agenda in the local community, according to the results of a study published today.

The Living Lake Macquarie Community Survey involved random telephone surveys of 600 homes from the Lake Macquarie and catchment area and included a range of questions on Lake issues and perceptions of the environmental health of the Lake.

When asked to list the top three issues effecting the local community, 27.1% of respondents included the Lake, beach and waterways. The result was considerably different from the identical study carried out in 2000, where the Lake ranked third at just 10%. The response headed the list, equal with crime which also registered 27%.

Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator Jeff Jansson said the results of the survey suggested that the local community were becoming increasingly aware of the issues effecting Lake health.

"I think it is good that people are so concerned. The local community are major stakeholders in the Lake and one of our key objectives was to raise interest and awareness about the issues which threaten its long term future."

The Office of the Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator was established in 1999 to implement the recommendations of the Premier's Taskforce Report on Lake Macquarie, published in the same year.

The survey also found that the Lake is by far the most important environmental issue of concern in the community, with 76% of respondents including it in their top three list.

But while community concern is increasing, the study found that there is also increasing optimism about the long term future of the Lake.

"We asked people to give the Lake a rating from one to ten, with one being poor and ten being excellent. The average mark was 6.24 which was a marginal increase on the 2000 result, where the mean rating was 6.13.

Even more encouraging is the fact that the younger respondents (18-24) are seeing the work in progress and becoming more positive in their outlook. In 2000 the average rating given from this age group was 5.85, and this year that figure jumped to 6.37."

Next we asked people whether they thought the Lake would get better, remain the same or get worse in the next five years. It was encouraging that 56% said they thought the state of the Lake would improve and only 21% feared it would get worse."

Jeff Jansson said the results of the survey would be used as a reference to assist in the future planning of community education and reporting programs. Comparisons with the 2000 survey results also provided a way of measuring shifts in perceptions and awareness within the local community.

For further information please contact Chris Ford/Jai McDermott, FordComm

Phone 49292063

Email info@fordcomm.com.au