

19 April 2015

Since 2003 Old Bar Beach has suffered extreme erosion resulting in the loss of 3 homes and 40 metres of foredune. There are now approximately 60 homes in immediate danger if urgent protection is not placed. The trigger point for demolition is 18 metres and already 2 homes sit within that 18 metre zone. Because of lack of action by authorities in January 2009 our community formed their own action group, Old Bar Beach Sand Replenishment Group Incorporated.

As a result of our search for leading experts in the field of beach protection we were introduced to Dr Shaw Mead, whose profile is on the web. Dr Mead visited in March, 2010 and our group, enthusiastic at the option he offered, worked hard and raised the \$54,500 for the study, which was delivered to us in September 2011. In January, 2015, Minister for Environment, Rob Stokes, concerned with the Old Bar Erosion, visited and inspected the beach himself. He then took pertinent documents on the off-shore reef to the NSW coastal Panel, the final authority on major beach protection, and we are waiting the outcome of their deliberations.

This is what our community of Old Bar is asking for

URGENT PROTECTION of the unstable foredune at Lewis Street by way of a “geofabric” revetment (which the property owners are prepared to pay for themselves)

OFF-SHORE REEF PROTECTION – as per the Feasibility study by Dr Shaw Mead (world leading oceanographer, environmental scientist and marine biologist) which can be carried out in 2 parts,

1. The first straight reef to replenish the sand in front of the Lewis Street properties and protect any revetment which may have been erected. This reef would be placed in the position of a disintegrated reef, which the locals confirm existed 20 or so years ago. On the costs calculated it should be possible to place this reef for between 3.5 and 4 million dollars.
2. If this is successful then consideration could be given to the second “multi-purpose” reef off the public school which would enhance the surfing and assist the tourist industry – this at a probable cost of 7 million dollars.

These artificial off-shore reefs are being used around the world, the best examples as close as Queensland Gold Coast’s Narrowneck Reef and a new reef being installed at Palm Beach. They are environmentally and ecologically friendly for as well as the advantages of protecting the beach and replenishing the sand, within just 2 weeks of their being placed new marine communities commence building and within six months the fish stocks return.

The advantages to the community in Old Bar – protection of public and private property to an amount of \$250 million dollars, restoration of beach amenity and return of tourists – Benefit to cost analysis done for the community by leading Professor of Environmental Management resulted in a 4:1 ratio, ie. for every \$1million spent – tourist return would be \$4 million, as well as the aforementioned property protection.

All beaches on the NSW coast are suffering. Our plan can be used as a “pilot plan” and if it is successful then, subject to research of each beach’s suitability, it can be applied to other beaches.

A statement made recently to our group by a Queensland scientist who is working around the world on beach preservation

‘NSW have never been greatly proactive with beach management works and has done almost no nourishment. Just reports and planning approaches. It seems to me that the harsh reality is that NSW will continue to spend huge amounts of money drawing red hazard lines along the coast until sometime in the future when Qld has beaches [and the tourists from nsw] and NSW has erosion, no beaches and more court cases nothing will happen in NSW.’

Unfortunately at the moment this is confirmed by NSW government’s past performance. Our beach protection plan is an opportunity for the present government to turn that around.
