



Vast amounts of rubbish were found on the bank behind the old *Parramatta* wreck

These kids go where others leave their rubbish

Training and coaching of skills required for surf survival is started at an early age, through the “Nipper” program, at the Macmaster Beach Surf Lifesaving Club. In the ‘off’ season the training turns towards nature conservation projects, partly with the aim for the young people to win points in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award program.

The club has to date completed 25 clean-up expeditions under the guidance of the conservation groups “Friends of the Colo” and “Willow Warrior”, efforts instrumental in producing 17 Gold Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards from the NSW Governor.

The work was initially carried out in sea kayaks along the Hawkesbury River inlets but as the amount of found rubbish has grown, the use of inflatable surf rescue vessels has also been needed. Launching from Patonga, the kayaks and the IRBs follow the foreshore, and the young participants scamper over the side to retrieve beer bottles, plastic bags, dislodged oyster bags, even a train door, to the delight of a group of 13 year old youngsters.

The program has been utilized by ‘Special Schools’ as a behaviour incentive and crime prevention tool.

A funding grant from Hawkesbury River Catchment Management has greatly eased the financial burden on the club. IRB fuel costs alone already exceed \$1,000.

The activities Coordinator, Graham Johnston, sees the program as another tool to develop skills and interests in conservation issues. It provides a good off-season social activity for the members, says Graham, but most of all, especially for the young people, it is great fun.

Despite a number of attempts by the BOA to have the garbage barge in Refuge Bay reinstated, NSW Maritime insists that there is no incidence of rubbish in the water or on the foreshore as a result of the removal of the barge. You may want to ask the kids if they share Maritime’s trust in all boat users’ consideration for the environment.

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