

A Plan for Managing Araluen Creek

By Su Wild-River

It's been a big few months for the Upper Deua Catchment Landcare Council (UDCLG).

The UDCLG has a strong history of successful Landcare projects, including rehabilitation of 21 sites along Araluen Creek between 1998 and 2004. That work sprang from community interest as well as many research projects into the groundwater, conservation, heritage and other features and values of the Araluen Creek. Work included stream bank stabilisation with rock and stone structures to slow the flow and raise the bed. There was also substantial weed clearing and riparian zone planting.

UDCLG has now commissioned Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council to manage a new project which will develop a 5-10 year plan for the management of Araluen Creek. The plan builds on highly successful previous work and will ensure the creek's sustainability, particularly given possible future weather events.

The plan is being developed with input from various experts to coordinate the many factors to be considered in planning for the future of the waterway. It will define future work in a coordinated way to attract grants and enable funding bodies to be confident of the capacity of the group, and the high quality of the work being undertaken.

The plan is being integrated to take into account water management, native vegetation, biodiversity, weeds, tree planting, pest animals and bushfire risk management, in partnership with relevant land holders. The plan will also address institutional plans such as the Palerang Council Local Environment Plan, NSW Department of Water, Water Sharing Plan for the Deua River and the unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources Plan.

The planning process is drawing on the **National Riparian Lands Research and Development Program** guidelines for planning river restoration. These guidelines describe five benefits of a project like this. First, planning provides public accountability and justifies why investment decisions are made. Second, the planning sets clear, measurable objectives allowing the project to be evaluated. Third, planning can help to distance site managers from the most obvious/visible issues and allows us to think on a catchment scale. Fourth, setting priorities avoids working on symptoms rather than causes, ensuring that work is done on the most important issues, instead of the ones that appear superficially important. Finally, planning avoids inefficiency in project management so that we do things in the right order.

Even before its completion, this planning project has helped to attract further grant funding. It was influential in assisting Upper Deua Catchment Landcare Group to receive a \$103,000 grant from an Environmental Services Order imposed on Big Island Mining as a result of licence breaches from Dargues Reef Mine. This grant will be used to continue rehabilitating the 21 sites worked on from 1998 to 2004, clearing the creek from encroaching casuarinas, removing privet and tree of heaven infestations, and excluding stock to optimise creek stabilisation strategies.

Upper Deua Catchment Landcare Group are to be congratulated for their solid Landcare achievements, and their best practice approach to moving forward wisely.



Photo by Rebecca Bradley, showing Araluen Creek with strong flow and entrained sediment, taken during recent site surveys.