

## **Lake Macquarie finalist in national and global river prize**

Lake Macquarie has received international acclaim for environmental management after being announced as one of four finalists for both the National and International Thiess *Riverprize*.

Judged by a panel of Australian and international experts, the prestigious *Riverprize* is awarded each year to a project that demonstrates outstanding efforts in the restoration and protection of waterways and catchments.

Awarded at the International *Riversymposium* in Brisbane in September, Lake Macquarie is the only waterway restoration project to be named as a finalist for both awards. Facilitated by the Office of the Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator, the Lake Macquarie Improvement Project has used innovative techniques to pioneer an integrated whole-of-government model for improving estuary health.

Since the project began in 1999, the approach, based on restoring natural systems, has resulted in an improvement in water quality, reduction in algae, an increase in seagrass coverage, rehabilitation of foreshore and the protection of once endangered natural wetlands. Lake Macquarie and Catchment Coordinator, Jeff Jansson, said the project has gained unprecedented support and interest from the local community.

“This has seen a dramatic increase in the number of Landcare groups working to improve the local environment. The latest community survey has also indicated that over 53 per cent of the local community believes the Lake environment has improved over the last five years,” Mr Jansson said.

“I am delighted that the committee and community’s hard work over the past seven years on our most valuable natural asset, Lake Macquarie, has gained recognition at both a national and international level,” Lake Macquarie Mayor and Chair of the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee Cr Greg Piper said.

Cr Piper explained that the key to success was coming up with a sustainable plan of management which balanced economic viability, environmental stewardship and social needs. “The integrated approach has ensured that, as well as addressing immediate environmental issues, long-term strategies are put in place and where possible the needs of the community are also met.”

The International and National *Riverprizes* will be awarded at a gala evening event during International *Riversymposium* in Brisbane on 5 September. Other national finalists are the Dee River Catchment (Qld), Margaret River Catchment (WA) and Torbay Catchment (WA).

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