

**Keep Australia Beautiful
Australian Clean Beaches Awards 2009**

**Mersey Bluff TAS
Joint Winner: Community Partnership category award**

Introduction

Mersey Bluff is located 8 minutes west of Devonport and is situated on Bass Strait. The Beach is bordered by a wonderful parkland reserve and Caravan Park, extensive sporting and recreation fields, a new skate park, and linked through to town by well maintained reserves, dotted with artistic installations and accessible by cycleway and footpaths.

The combination of natural beauty, with the wonderful beach, occasional surf, two blow holes and headland walks, coupled with great facilities such as the magnificent Maritime Museum, a great amphitheatre, the Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, plenty of fantastic shaded seating and BBQ alternatives, along with a focus on aboriginal heritage, and the only coastal Wishing Well I've seen during my travels, make a visit to Mersey Bluff a necessity for anyone travelling to Tasmania on the ferry or for adventures of any age.

All with the backdrop of the Mersey Bluff Lighthouse, views to Table Cape and Stanley, and with a relatively short drive to the World renowned Cradle Mountain.

The area is well served by the Mersey Bluff Precinct Project.

Community Partnerships

- Recognises achievement in community beautification, presentation and pride.
- Recognises communities which proudly preserve and value cultural history.
- Recognises partnership achievements by government and/or business with local communities.

Mersey Bluff has well developed plans to establish a brand new \$4 million plus Surf Club on site, which will no doubt enhance the already popular and successful organisation. The existing 400+ members will be treated to a best practice building with a keen eye to maintaining the aspect of the Club to the local area. The Surf Club reflects the commitment by Council and community to sound environmental practices through use of energy and water saving devices, and provides numerous services to locals and visitors alike. The ablutions facilities, providing hot timed showers to the public, are maintained twice a day, and enhance the numerous beach showers along the promenade as well.

Not far from the Surf Club are located the excellent and newly created skate park, popular with children of all ages, along with a great playground area which was well utilised during the time of my visit. The innovative children's toilet was a great idea.

The whole precinct is well used for a series of social and education events throughout the year, and the amphitheatre has fantastic acoustics. These events include the Devonport Dance Fiesta and Devonport Jazz.

Adjacent to the beach and basically across the road from the Surf Club is the Meercroft Aged Care facility, with over 140 residents. Residents are brought over or walk across themselves to enjoy the coastal visitors or kiosk. Disabled access is no issue at Mersey Bluff, and the balance between the ages of visitors coming to the beach appears to work well to enhance the overall experience.

Environmental Innovation

-Recognises achievement through innovation by community, government and business under the principles and practical actions associated with environment protection and sustainability.

Simple measures such as planting locally provenanced trees to protect from the prevailing South Westerly winds work well to establish the perception that this is an environmentally aware community which cares for the beach.

Council has a confirmed commitment to maintaining this area as a playground for the Community, and while this may not be considered as innovation to some, considering the adverse effects of the economic downturn (there were major lay-offs announced the morning of my visit) Council's drive to maintain the area as a pivotal feature of its plan to keep the area vibrant should be acknowledged. This commitment is reflected in the great work Council, the Community and local businesses have achieved in revitalising the Devonport East area around the docking area for the Ferry services.

Resource Recovery

-Recognises achievement in community litter management and reduction including the undertaking of litter audits, and litter education programs.

-Recognises achievement in resource recovery and waste management including initiatives which conserve resources, water or energy minimisation practices; the recovery and reuse of materials including packaging, and the appropriate disposal of non-recyclable materials.

Council maintains a series of bins around the beach and foreshore area which are regularly emptied and maintained. Litter reduction information is also clearly displayed. Council's Transfer Station recycles much of the materials collected and these facilities are available at the beach.

The Surf Club undertakes regular clean ups throughout the year and from what I could see, the area inspired visitors not to litter as the beauty of the place encouraged a sense of stewardship.

Protection of the Environment

-Recognises achievement in the protection of the natural environment and, specifically, the preservation of native flora and fauna.

7 local schools along with Fonterra, the local dairy business, work together to eradicate weeds along the foreshore and Bluff, and along with working with Council, undertake extensive tree planting in the area.

The variety of recreational activities available both on the beach and at the adjacent sporting fields all focus attention on accessing and protecting the local environment. Activities such as abseiling and rock climbing are undertaken on the strict guideline that the environment and local Aboriginal heritage is to be protected, and that the near pristine nature of the Bluff reserve is to be maintained. Extensive cycle ways/footpaths which meander from the Don River all the way through to Devonport itself bring locals and visitors alike closer to the environment and showcase the work undertaken by the Community.

Water Conservation

-Recognises sustainable water management within communities which has combined innovative water conservation and water re-use initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

Mersey Bluff exhibited a commitment to using water saving devices and providing adequate information on responsible water usage. Plans for the new Surf Club also utilise best practice water saving engineering as well.

Energy Conservation

-Recognise sustainable energy management within communities which has combined innovative energy conservation initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

The ablutions blocks, along with the local Caravan Park and Aboriginal Centre have energy management systems are in place, and planned for buildings utilise best practice energy saving engineering as well.

Young Legends

-Recognises environmental achievement through youth initiative and/or by a community, which encourages and promotes youth initiative and environmental education.

The Devonport Surf Life Saving Club maintains a strong Nippers program and local youth take full advantage of all the recreation facilities located on and around the beach. Council also recognises the diversity of the needs of local youth and run a number of events and activities throughout the year.

Special Thanks

Devonport City Council, especially Mayor Lynn Laycock and Phil Murray
Representatives from the Devonport Surf Club
Evonne and Leanne from Council for getting things organised
KAB Tas for joining me on the day and for arranging a wonderful breakfast!

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