

# REPORT ON SEPTEMBER MEETING

**Lake Illawarra:** Recent history and proposed developments for its preservation.

At our September meeting Mr Doug Prosser, President of the Lake Illawarra Authority, began by outlining the history of the lake as he remembers it during a lifetime of close association with it. He explained how increasing urbanisation has led to a gradual deterioration in the quality of its water, especially in the years after World War II when a great expansion of housing took place. While the area remained unsewered, unwanted nutrients seeped into the lake, causing nuisance algal growth. In addition, every new subdivision around the lake has contributed its quota of silt during the developmental stage, inevitably followed by increased runoff from streets, roofs and concrete, along with the usual accumulation of rubbish from street gutters, all of which washes into the lake when rain falls.

In 1977 the Lake Illawarra Management Committee was established as a joint

body of Wollongong and Shellharbour Councils. Although this committee did much good work in researching the lake's problems, encouraging cleanups and developing community awareness, its lack of financial support precluded any extensive remedial work. Through the use of one-off government grants such as the RED scheme, improvements were made to the foreshores by the development of parks and picnic areas.

Thirteen years later the Committee was replaced by the Lake Illawarra Authority of seven members, including one representative from each Council and five appointed by the Minister. This body was given ongoing government assistance, beginning with \$500,000 p.a. to be matched by the Councils who have preferred to give assistance in kind rather than in cash.

Examples of their work in recent years have been the dredging of Griffin's Bay, with associated landfill as the a necessary means of disposing of the sediments; and jetties, walkways and landscaping carried out by unemployed people in conjunction with training programmes at TAFE.

Doug also explained how the Authority monitors the water level in the lake after rain, judging the appropriate level of lake and tide before opening the channel at the right time to ensure optimum scouring of the sand. Contrary to popular belief, the lake is not tidal beyond the channel section. Fluctuations in water level are rather due to a rocking action in the water, induced by winds acting on the surface.

All present finished the evening with a much clearer understanding of the problems of the lake and how long-time degradation is being reversed by proper management.