



Media Release

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For immediate release: **Concerns in the funding for Pittwater's Caulerpa eradication**

Careel Bay in Pittwater, north of Sydney, is recognized as an environmentally sensitive area, but unfortunately it has an infestation of the invasive weed *Caulerpa taxifolia*. It was first identified in December 2000 and then covered 0.3ha. Attempts at eradication of *Caulerpa* began in late 2001 with osmotic salt treatment and jute matting being tried with a reported cost to 2006 of \$150,000. Although salt treatment worked at other locations, it failed to eradicate the weed in Careel Bay. There was a shift of effort in 2004 from eradication to control with the Control Plan released in February 2004. But it is apparent that control methods have failed. The infestation has now spread throughout Pittwater covering an estimated 300ha. There is a large infestation off Station Beach, along the western foreshores and around Scotland Island. It has recently been identified at three locations in Brisbane Waters and also off Patonga Beach in the Hawkesbury River.

We now see that the Government has withdrawn all funding for the eradication program in Pittwater, concentrating on the education of the public. It appears that funding was the primary controlling factor in the development of the Government's management plans for *Caulerpa*. And this is indicated in correspondence by DPI Minister Ian Macdonald to Pittwater Council in July 2004 where he stated "should Council believe this matter is a high priority and wish to provide resources or funding to assist with the control program, they would be greatly received." This comment was also of concern to the Sydney Coastal Councils Group that it formed a *Caulerpa* working group to develop strategies for a "whole of Government" approach on the issue.

It has been recently reported that a briefing note to the DPI's Director General "recommends the cutting back or stopping salt application in Pittwater (and other infestation sites in NSW) to save \$47,550 and instead spending \$2300 in public education."

AAG president Phil Ingram said: "Just what is this Government's commitment to protecting marine biodiversity? The State Government cannot find the funds to spend on the eradication of a recognized threat to an environmentally sensitive area such as Careel Bay. Yet they can spend upwards of tens of millions of dollars on a process of biodiversity protection from unspecified threats, with unspecified goals and that has significant impacts on the economies of local communities with the implementation of six marine parks along the NSW coast." Phil Ingram is referring to the Government's implementation of the National Representative System of Marine Park Areas with their associated zoning plans where recreational and commercial fishers are excluded from areas for no scientifically justified reason other than to 'protect biodiversity'. Phil Ingram continues "The Government does next to nothing for known threats to specific areas but pursues an agenda with no specified goals other than for political purposes. There are no votes to be won nor preference deals to be obtained in protecting the sea grasses in Careel Bay."

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