

New Kirra break plan

Initiative welcomed as surf rage boils over at Snapper Rocks



Surf's up at Snapper yesterday with crowded waves . . . very crowded waves

• Picture: Glenn Hampson

by Jeremy Pierce
Tweed bureau chief

A SPECIAL blueprint is being hatched to save Kirra's world-famous surf break.

Once known as one of the world's top surf spots and the scene of some of the sport's most memorable moments, Kirra rarely breaks these days – yesterday was a memorable exception.

A massive build-up of sand over the past decade has completely changed the beach and debate has raged for years on how to fix it.

A group of scientists from Griffith University's Coastal Management Centre is canvassing a list of options to return the beach to its former glory, including reconstructing the Big Groyne.

The launch of the project comes with surf rage on the rise as surfers

TIMELINE OF KIRRA'S HIGHS AND LOWS



- **Early 1970s** – Big Groyne built at Kirra's southern end.
- **1975** – Little Groyne constructed near the Kirra surf club.
- **1995** – 30 metres taken off Big Groyne to help fight erosion at Greenmount Beach.
- **2001** – Start of Tweed River sand bypass project.
- **2003** – Little Groyne completely buried in sand.
- **2006** – Project launched by Griffith University Coastal Management Centre to restore the beach.

who used to ride at Kirra, Greenmount, Rainbow and Snapper Rocks are now all jostling for waves at Snapper.

Kirra's standing in world surfing is legendary. Back in the 1960s and '70s it was the Coast's premier surf break and the place where legends such as Michael 'MP' Peterson,

Wayne 'Rabbit' Bartholomew and Peter Townend learned their craft on the way to world domination.

Even up until a decade ago it was still pumping regularly and the sight of thousands of spectators crammed on to Kirra Hill to watch Kelly Slater win the old Kirra Pro is one of the most famous images in surfing.

Griffith Coastal Management Centre's Neil Lazarow is behind the project and will prepare a report to be handed down in July.

He said the project would involve extensive community consultation and testing of any preferred models.

The likely alternatives are to wait for a cyclone season, reconstruct the

Big Groyne, which was reduced by 30m in the early 1990s, or to change the regime of the Tweed River sand bypass project, which is often blamed for the problems of the southern Gold Coast beaches.

"We need to really examine a whole host of options and see what the best outcomes are," he said.

He said the Big Groyne could be extended using geotextile bags, similar to those used at the Narrow Neck reef, which would be easier to remove than tonnes of rocks, while the sand pumping would have a lesser effect if the pumping outlet was moved north to Bilinga.

Bartholomew, who won a world championship as a Kirra local in 1978, welcomed the initiative, especially with surf rage increasing. "We need to alleviate the pressure on the crowds at Snapper, which is the only place anyone can surf."