

INSIDE KIRRA

THE CALL TO ARMS TO SAVE ONE OF SURFING'S SACRED SITES BY LUKE KENNEDY

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN A GENUINE KIRRA BARREL WAS ENOUGH to render all material possessions worthless and all so-called transcendental experiences meaningless. It was the holiest of holies, one of those places that gave surfers that heightened sense of awareness that they were privy to a realm of temporal pleasure that went way beyond anything anyone else was enjoying. Even if you hadn't surfed it, the knowledge of its existence seemed to provide some ultimate point to your being as a surfer. Buddhists sought Nirvana, Christians Heaven, surfers just wanted Kirra. But perhaps the true measure of a wave's significance is the number of times it has been used as a reference point to other waves ridden. How many surfers have scored a good session or wave somewhere and [deluded or not] later uttered, "It was breaking like Kirra," to a mate? Kirra

to see take place," Phil said. "We want the 30 metres that were taken off the Big Groyne added back on, the dumping grid for the dredging moved further offshore, and a change in the management structure which monitors the sand which is pumped across from the Tweed Bypass." Phil is quick to stress that it's not just the wave that has been affected by the excessive sand build-up, but also the entire marine environment. "The reef off Kirra was once 40 feet deep and frequented by rare species of turtles, grey nurse sharks and sea horses. Now it's about 10 feet deep and there are far fewer signs of marine life." There's no questioning the commitment of Phil and Coastal Alliance. Every day of the Quikky Pro, he and his supporters were set up adjacent to the contest site gathering signatures and raffling tickets for the save Kirra cause. He has compiled detailed maps of

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has always been the ultimate measuring stick.

This year, in the lead-up to the Quikky Pro, there were signs that Kirra was making something of a comeback. Swept down the coast by Coolangatta's irrepressible sweep, many of the world's best surfers were surprised to find that the best section on the stretch was not behind the rock at Snapper, but just behind Big Groyne at Kirra. Lumps of swell would lurch towards the fabled point and then suddenly bolt along the bank like a thoroughbred let out of the starting gate. For those who could hold on the rewards were there. According to Phil Arnott, the glimpses of all-time Kirra we saw were the result of a reduction in the quantity of sand being pumped from the Tweed Bypass and a temporary cessation of the dredging programme, which sees sand dumped in close proximity to the Coolangatta stretch. Phil, the president of the Coastal Alliance group, is leading the fight for the restoration of Kirra. "There's three main initiatives we want

the ocean floor around Kirra, and last year travelled to Sydney to present his case to Malcolm Turnbull. The main obstacle on a political level is the fact that the Queensland government pays the NSW government around \$6.80 for every cubic metre of sand they pump across the border. When you're talking millions of tonnes of sand, that's a big contract. "It's a 25-year contract, and they even fine the NSW government if they don't pump enough sand," Phil said. Phil is adamant that a better-managed system can allow everyone to have their cake and eat it. "Getting Kirra back doesn't mean the end of Snapper," he stressed. "We just have to put surfers in a position where they can play more of a role in monitoring the system." This is not the last you'll hear from Phil at the Coastal Alliance group. "We're definitely planning some kind of large-scale action. We haven't had the call to arms yet for a demonstration, but when we do we'll have the masses there." **■**
For further information on saving Kirra go to www.coastalliance.org.au