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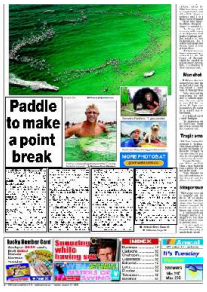

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## Surfers ship out and shape up to put Kirra protest on map

# Paddle to make a point break

FORMER world champion Mick Fanning believes there is hope for the future of Kirra Point after more than 1500 surfers united to paddle out in protest over the lost break yesterday.

Fanning, who learned how to ride a barrel at Kirra with mates Joel Parkinson and Dean Morrison, was one of the throng who paddled out to form a map of Australia just off the headland to let the NSW and Queensland Governments know the local surfing community wants change.

"It's amazing you know. I just registered and I was number 846 and there were people lining up after me," he said.

"It's a huge turnout and it's just great to see not just the surfing community, but local community backing the cause and, hopefully, it will get through to the Government and we might be able to get something done.

"People showing up today show they actually care. It's so sad to see what's going on with it right now. People wouldn't even know that it was one of the world famous waves and now just look at it."

Fanning spoke for the other professional surfers in attendance, including Joel Parkinson, Luke Egan, Stephanie Gilmore, Bede Durbidge and Mark Occhilupo.

Kirra Point has not broken as it should since 2002, one year after the start of the Tweed sand bypass pumping operation, which transfers sand from Fingal beach to Point Danger.

Millions of cubic metres of sand has clogged Kirra Point, with the area now resembling a desert.

Protesters listened to speeches by surfers Fanning and Wayne Deane, Griffith University scientist Neil Lazarow, Surfrider Foundation member Bob Moffatt and local identity John Standing before local surfing legend and the man known as the King of Kirra, Michael Peterson, said a few words.

Peterson is rarely seen around the surfing world these days but was happy to attend the protest, presiding over proceedings like a surfing patriarch.

The surfers then hit the beach in a tidal wave of enthusiasm and while the map was a bit out of shape, the protest was well made.

Thousands of people lined the point along the roadway and on Kirra Hill to add their support.

Grommets on shortboards were joined by masters on malibu boards, while bodyboarders, clubbie boardriders and kayakers also joined in.

Organisers said that 1370 surfers registered for the protest with about another 500 believed to have joined in without officially signing on.

Wayne Deane said the protesters want the Government to look at the beach amenity, the management of the sand bypass system and the economy of Kirra.

"Kirra has been lost for swimming for the older generation and the younger kids, so has fishing, Kirra reef and diving," he said.

"We gained the super bank which is one wave and has led to overcrowding, surf rage and hot sand walks. Parents no longer want to take their children to the beach because it's too far to walk."

Deane said the bypass operation needed to be better managed. He said a North Kirra outlet was also wanted so that sand could bypass Coolangatta bay.

"The Queensland Government budget is $36.6 billion and all we need to make it work is one 10,000th," he said.

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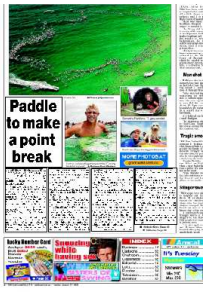


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Hundreds of boardriders paddle out in the shape of Australia ● ***Picture: joliphotos.com***

Samantha Frankland, 11, gets barrelled

Rocky and Zippy the dog join the protest

Former world surfing champion Mick Fanning lends his support ● ***Pictures: Scott Fletcher***

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