



Surfers unite to bring back famous break at Kirra

GOLD COAST: Australia's top surfers, past and present, have hit the waves at Queensland's iconic Kirra Point beach to protest its transformation from popular surf spot to lifeless desert.

Protesters hope the symbolic paddle-out involving more than 1500 people will convince the Government to return Kirra to its former glory as one of the world's best breaks.

Surfing champions Stephanie Gilmore and Mick Fanning joined local legend Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in yesterday's Australia Day honours, and hundreds of others to form a 100m-wide human map

of Australia (pictured) to raise the profile of their cause.

Hundreds more watched the spectacle from the shore, providing flashes of Kirra in its heyday as one of Australia's most popular beachfronts.

Kirra has been the focus of protesters since 2002, when a sand-pumping project set up jointly by the NSW and Queensland governments changed its terrain.

Originally designed to stop Kirra beach eroding, it has done the reverse – dumping more than 10 million cubic metres of sand and creating what the locals consider the "Great Southern Desert".

Protesters believe Kirra's

once world-famous barrels have disappeared, along with a nearby coral reef which has been literally buried in sand.

"The message is quite clear ... the NSW and Queensland governments need to really get down to Kirra and see the devastation for themselves," event organiser Andrew McKinnon said.

He said the event was an omen of what Kirra could be if the state governments got their acts together.

The sand-pumping project is part of a 25-year agreement to maintain Gold Coast beaches, including Kirra, which weathered massive erosion problems in the 1960s. – AAP

