

**ADJOURNMENT**  
**Waterways Management**  
**Wet Tropics Environment Projects**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD** (Queensland--Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (10.01 p.m.)--In contrast to the negative whining, carping, pinpricking, muckraking approach of Labor, as demonstrated by the previous speech of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate (Senator Faulkner), tonight I want to speak of real Australians doing positive things for their country. I speak of those who are happily working away because they are doing what really matters, what Australians are really concerned about: looking after their environment for themselves and their descendants.

A couple of Saturdays ago, at the invitation of Councillor Geraldine Knapp of the Brisbane City Council, I had the pleasure of visiting a project that a number of Brisbane people are involved in: saving and repairing the waterways in the Brisbane City area. Those people belong to a group called SOWN, which stands for **Save Our Waterways--Now!** The project that I visited has been going for some time; the former councillor for the area, Mr Brian Hallinan, also initiated it in years gone by. I was accompanied in my inspection of this work by a couple of people who are very much committed to the project: a Mr Bob Whiteman, who is President of SOWN; and Mr Brian Sait, who is the coordinator of the project.

This project was developed to provide a working model of waterways management, with an emphasis on ongoing maintenance. It is presently being developed in Brisbane's western suburbs in 28 square kilometres of the catchments of the Enoggera, Ithaca and Fish Creek systems, which join together to form Breakfast Creek. The creeks draining this part of the Brisbane area are over 23 kilometres in length. The 46 kilometres of creek banks, plus hundreds of kilometres of usually dry gullies, had been allowed to become totally degraded, caused by citizens dumping garden cuttings of vines and exotics over many years and because of the council's inability to carry out corrective maintenance.

This SOWN project is to rectify some longstanding environmental concerns that residents have had about the state of Enoggera and Ithaca Creeks. It is a solid example of the federal government, local governments and the community working together to clean up Australia's waterways. In the last year alone some 20,000 native trees and

grasses were planted, with 900 cubic metres of mulch being spread. The strength of the project has been the work by 700 or so volunteers, who have contributed more than 68,000 volunteer hours since the project's inception three years ago.

The federal government, through the Natural Heritage Trust, has committed some \$56,800 to return the creeks to their natural state. This funding ensures the future viability of the project for another three years. The project is not only an example of our Natural Heritage Trust working but also of other government programs working together.

The SOWN project has had the assistance of a Green Corps team. As parliamentary secretary responsible for the Green Corps, I am proud that the local Green Corps team was able to assist the SOWN project last November. The Green Corps team dedicated time to identifying weeds and removing large amounts of *Tecoma stans* and *Ochna* from areas surrounding the creeks.

The government's work for the dole scheme has also been of benefit to the project, with teams funded by the scheme and organised by the Moreton Bay Marine Association being allocated to assist on this project. This project is a classic example of Australians working together with their governments to get real outcomes and returns for the environment--and, through that, for their country.

I have a few extra minutes, so I will just mention another good news story. That concerns, up my way in North Queensland, a group called the North Queensland Joint Board. It is rather an odd sort of name, but it is a combination--a cooperative getting together of local governments in Far North Queensland. These local governments have got together to become involved in environmental repair work, particularly tree planting, and in the wet tropics vegetation management program.

The councils involved include the Atherton Shire, Cairns City, Cardwell Shire, Cook Shire, Douglas Shire, Eacham Shire, Herberton Shire, Hinchinbrook Shire, Johnstone Shire and Mareeba Shire. For 1997-98 the projects being undertaken by the North Queensland Joint Board total some \$1,455,166, with the federal government's Natural Heritage Trust again playing a major role in the money allocated for those projects.