NOT SO FISHY BUSINESS AS WILDLIFE RETURNS TO THE BRUXNER WETLANDS

Wetlands near the Bruxner Highway have come alive to the sound of ducks, egrets, sandpipers and other native wildlife as part of a successful site rehabilitation by Roads and Maritime Services.

The wetland area, once used for harvesting sugar cane and farming cattle, was acquired by the agency for the Pacific Highway upgrade project a decade ago.

Parliamentary Secretary for Northern NSW, Ben Franklin said it had been a long journey to rehabilitate the site to ensure it was suitable for local flora and fauna to flourish in future.

"Work to transform the area into a wetland involved relocating the cattle, removing the cane and filling a major drain," Mr Franklin said.

"It’s encouraging to see with careful management of the water quality level and flow the natural regeneration of the property has been accelerated. The work carried out to date has been so successful, birds and other wildlife has increasingly returned to the site, making it one of the state’s best wetland areas."

The 220 hectare property acquired for the upgrade included 18 hectares which were identified to offset the impact of the Ballina bypass as compensatory wetland. It’s proposed other parts of the property will be used as a biodiversity offset for the 155 kilometre Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade.

Mr Franklin said it was envisaged the rehabilitated area would eventually become an estuarine wetland and had already been identified as a key birdwatching site.

“Birds spotted at the wetlands include Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, Great Egret, Black-fronted Dotterel and Marsh Sandpiper,” Mr Franklin said.

“Anecdotal advice from local bird watchers has identified 160 different species at the wetland site.

“The evidence of rehabilitation prompted Richmond Landcare to implement a school pilot project for primary and secondary students."

The project was developed to deliver educational opportunities to local students and designed and delivered through the Dorroughby Environmental Education Centre.

Mr Franklin said it was developed to teach students about the importance of the environment and ways to preserve and maintain it.
“The project was held earlier this year and involved water sampling and scientific research on rehabilitating wildlife,” Mr Franklin said.

“Five schools, three of which were primary, took part in the pilot project which was a great success.”