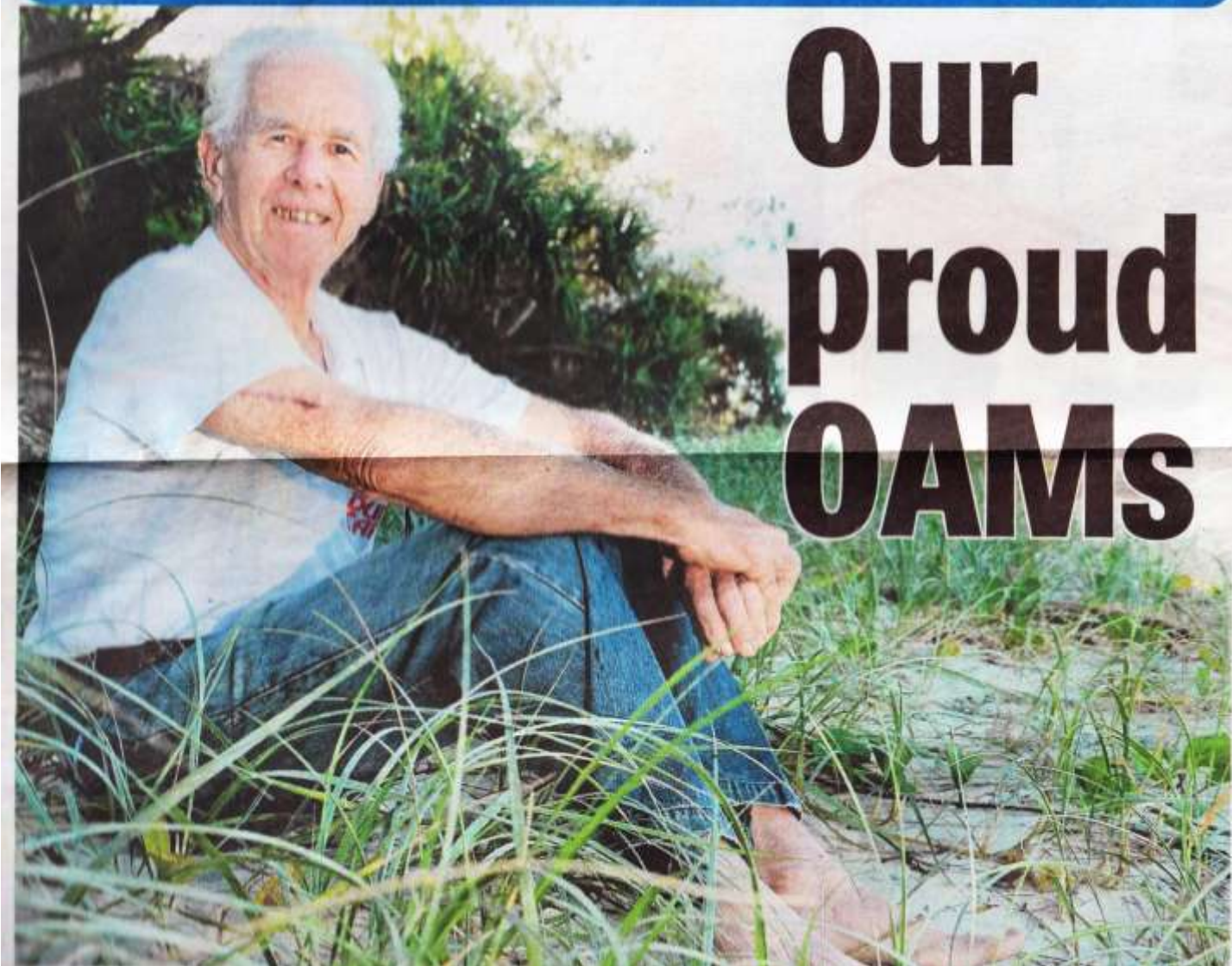


MEET THE IANS WHO HAVE CHANGED THE TWEED

Our proud OAMs



IT HAD TO BE DONE: Ian "Bunny" Rabbitts has formed the first Dunecare group in Australia, now he's an OAM recipient.

PHOTO: JOHN GASS /TWE

By MAIRI MANLEY

THEIR interests may be worlds apart, but they share a name and the honour of receiving Order of Australia medals.

Ian "Bunny" Rabbitts and Ian McKnight have been recognised for their services to the community.

Bunny formed the first Dunecare group in

Australia at Fingal Head and has worked tirelessly to preserve and restore the environment.

Former Daily News columnist, Mr McKnight is being recognised for his long and dynamic service to lawn bowls.

"To say I'm overwhelmed by the award would be an understatement," Mr Rabbitts said.

Asked why he has devoted so much time and energy to protecting the environment, his response was direct and simple.

"It had to be done," he said.

It all began in 1983 when he started clearing tracks of bitou bush behind his home at Fingal Head.

By 1986 he and other concerned residents,

including Kate McKenzie, had formed a Coast Care group.

Tweed Shire Council provided equipment and encouragement.

The group has now regenerated about 3km of land.

With their own nursery and a lot of "bloody hard work," the motivation is still there.

"It's very satisfying," Mr Rabbitts said.

"It's not about getting awards or rewards.

"It's about making a difference and treasuring our environment."

He said he wasn't looking for recognition. "I just saw the task ahead of me and knew it just had to be done."

■ See Mr McKnight's story on Page 6.