

**Thursday 4 May, 2017**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Ecohealth report card on the Macleay's waterways**

A new report card, showing a snapshot of the health of waterways in the Macleay Catchment, was launched in Kempsey this week.

The Ecohealth program was undertaken by the UNE Aquatic Ecology and Restoration Research Group and coordinated by Kempsey Shire Council, North Coast Local Land Services (NCLLS), Northern Table Lands Local Land Services (NTLLS) and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH).

It measures key indicators of aquatic ecosystem health and compares results against national guidelines to determine how healthy rivers and estuaries are for the plants and animals that live in them.

The assessment covered 44 sites across the Macleay Catchment which encompasses sub-catchment areas within Walcha, Armidale Dumaresq and Kempsey Local Government Areas, 32 freshwater and 12 estuarine sites and reflects the average health of those river systems over a 12-month period.

It found that waterways ranged from those in good condition with very high biodiversity to tableland and estuary sites in poor condition. The catchment received an overall grade of a C minus. Sampling will be undertaken again in the next couple of years and comparisons can then be made to see if improvements have been achieved.

Council's Senior Natural Resources Officer, Ron Kemsley, said the aim of the Ecohealth Report is to provide the community with an easy to understand periodic update on the health of individual catchments using a simple grading system.

"It's important because we now have a baseline of data and information to use to determine where the Macleay River and its tributaries are under stress and where we need to invest more in environmental management activities," he said.

"While the results highlight there is work to be done, it also shows that there are valuable areas of biodiversity in the mid-reaches of the Macleay. Council is committed to improving the health of the Macleay's waterways and has a range of estuary management plans and environmental programs in place."

More information on Council's projects and copies of the Ecohealth Report Card can be found at Council's Customer Service Centre or visit:

[www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au)

**Photo caption:** The Macleay Valley's first Ecohealth report card was launched at Riverside Park by Mayor Liz Campbell, Council's Senior Natural Resources Officer Ron Kemsley and representatives from North Coast Local Land Services, Northern Table Lands Local Land Services, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the University of New England.