

Lake rescue will save nippers from sharks

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SURF sport stars and life-saving clubs want the council to clean one of the city's largest lakes because doing so will ensure nippers are not training in canals with man-eating bull sharks.

Residents fear Lake Hugh Muntz at Mermaid Waters is facing a "death sentence" unless council provides funding for a management plan to rescue the 43ha water catchment from a blue green algae bloom.

Since it was created 35 years ago the lake, surrounded by at least 365 prestige homes, has been a training ground for the Coast's top ironmen, ironwomen and triathletes as they rose through the junior ranks.

Former champion ironwoman Hayley Bateup is supporting a petition by residents from the Lake Hugh Muntz Care Group, which is negotiating with council to get the lake reopened by summer.

Ms Bateup recalled earlier in her career training in the bull shark-infested canals before she coached nippers on their boards in the safety of the lake's mostly fresh waters.

"I feel that without it there isn't a safe place for fellow Gold Coasters, including children, that could train that is free of sharks and feel safe during large seas," Bateup said.

Australian ironwoman champion Kirsty Holmes, who has also signed the petition, wrote that she was fortunate enough that her parents bought a house on the lake.

"My sister Denby and brother Zane and I spent countless hours training,



Hayley Bateup with Mermaid Beach SLSC Nippers (from left) Erika Waite 9, Talla Peters, 10, and Milla Hinton, 11. Picture: MIKE BATTERHAM

swimming, paddling, sailing and playing on this unique body of water," Holmes wrote.

"Back in the early '80s it was beautiful, clear and amazing to me that it was a freshwater lake so close to the beach. That council is not intending to put any time or money into the upkeep of this waterway is a real disappointment to me."

The Kurrawa Club has supported the petition, noting "there are no other freshwater options located nearby", and the Mermaid Beach club regards it as a "valuable asset for

all residents which must be protected".

Mermaid Beach Surf Life-saving Club operations manager Grant Brown said nippers were the future of lifesaving.

"It is vital our nippers as young as seven years old begin to develop their confidence in a safe and controlled environment," he wrote.

"For these young kids, learning their skills is dependent on confidence and the flat water of Lake Hugh Muntz is the best facility we have to develop this."

LHM Care Group spokesman Phil Nott said several meetings had been conducted with council after the lake was closed three months ago.

"We are working with council on finding and implementing effective long-term solutions," he said.

"The priority of the community is to get this lake reopened ASAP and we would like to think this is council's priority as well."

Area councillor Paul Taylor said the council had contacted a scientist from Griffith Uni-

versity to investigate and find a solution and \$100,000 would be set aside in the next budget.

"They (the residents) seem to think we are not spending money on this. We're trying our best on it," Cr Taylor said.

Money would be used for groundwater studies, sediment samples and a "trial of aeration devices". "It's a lake that was dug out years ago, fed by (stormwater) drains and saline water. It's going to cost a lot of money to get a solution," Cr Taylor said. "We are working hard to get a solution."