



DEDICATED: Doug, Oenone and Michael Schofield at Merewether. - Picture by Dean Osland

Family tree planting saves coast

By JACQUI JONES

THREE generations of Schofields are planting a family tree in a Merewether project that has received state recognition for environmental protection.

Novocastrian Doug Schofield is one of 23 Landcare volunteers who have removed the weed bitou bush and planted native species on the Merewether coastline.

Since 2004, the group has dedicated more than 11000 hours doing work with a value of about \$2.70,000 and

planted about 25,000 plants.

Helping the cause is Mr Schofield's son Michael and granddaughter Oenone, 3, who volunteer their time on regular visits from Tasmania.

Michael's interest in land care started at the age of 14 when he helped establish a park at Kotara.

One of Oenone's first birthday presents, a Wollemi pine, was planted there.

Michael said that Doug inspired his interest and they both encouraged Oenone.

"Oenone's a tree grower for sure," Michael said.

Michael, who works in

forestry, admires the Merewether project.

"They've established some good areas that are self-maintaining," he said.

"They're tree growers, not tree planters."

The work helped Merewether Beach shine in Keep Australia Beautiful's NSW Clean Beach Challenge.

It received an environment protection award yesterday in the Hunter and Lower North Coast division.

Merewether Landcare convener Griff Foley said it was recognition for the volunteers.