



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:** Landcare volunteers Margaret Lovell and Andrea Hackney near Surf House. — *Picture by Anita Jones*

## Winning weed by weed

IF the city is suffering the affliction of Newcastle malaise as some people claim, a group of Merewether residents have found the perfect antidote.

While the latest delays and complications over development at Surf House and Merewether Beach were causing blood pressure to rise, Landcare workers were calmly going about their mission.

Over the past five years, they have rescued the beachfront from noxious weeds, working from Dixon Park to the Merewether Baths.

Five years of dedication is paying off.

Worker Griff Foley said the group's 19 members have put in 8000 hours of work, with an estimated value of about \$240,000.

They have planted 25,000 tube stock and increased native flora species from

the three they found struggling among the weeds and rubbish to 18.

Some of the species they have planted include coastal species of flowering banksia, westringia and correa as well as tea-trees, rushes and wattles. They are growing fast and strong, the workers said.

The efforts of the group show the power of the people, the volunteers said.

Foley estimates that a total of about 10 hectares has been cleared.

The group have more ambitious plans for a native flora park on Merewether headland.

There's a range of views in the group about the beach's future look. Andrea Hackney would like to see more parkland at Merewether while Foley wants the choice either to enjoy the beautiful view while working or from a quality restaurant.