

Landcare celebrates beach award, and natives happy too



By **TIM CONNELL**

A WAR on weeds waged by retirees around Merewether Beach has won them an eco-award, and their leader says native plants are staging a comeback.

Merewether Landcare took out the NSW Environmental Protection category of the Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beach Awards on Friday.

Judges praised the group's eradication of the noxious bitou bush from sand dunes, a battle that convenor Griff Foley said his band of 23 retirees was winning.

"There are no thoughts of us stopping, because there's still a lot of bitou bush around the baths," Mr Foley said.

"But the native plants we've put in are re-establishing the connections between the animals and vegetation."

Since forming in 2004, the group has worked 8000 hours and planted more than 25,000 native saplings.

Apart from firming up the dunes and stopping sand blowing into neighbouring streets, Mr Foley said the work had led to a boom in the bird and lizard population.

WINNING: Landcare members Lori Hungerford and Griff Foley at Dixon Park yesterday.

- Picture by Natalie Grono

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