

No uni grade reports study

Ombudsman opts out

By LISA SEWELL
Education Reporter

The NSW Ombudsman's Department has refused to investigate claims of grade altering at the University of Wollongong, finding that Dr Ted Steele's allegations were unfounded.

Earlier this month Dr Steele, an associate professor in the biological sciences department, created a furore in the academic world when he accused the university of coercing him into agreeing to boost the marks of two honours students he had originally failed.

In a report to Dr Steele obtained by the *Illawarra Mercury*, deputy ombudsman Chris Wheeler stated: "It does not appear to me that you were directed or instructed in any way to elevate or upgrade the marks awarded to the two students in question."

Mr Wheeler also said that in the information he had been provided by Dr Steele, it did not appear the procedure followed in the assessment of the two theses in question had been flawed.

It finished: "I therefore decline to investigate your complaint."

Dr Steele said he had been "threatened and intimidated" since he spoke out about the practice of grade altering (which, he said, was by no means unique to Wollongong), but stood by his claims yesterday.

He said he had naively thought the Ombudsman's office would be able to investigate.

"In a discussion with the NSW Ombudsman's office this morning I found out that they do not like getting involved with academics in disputes about marking/assessment quality ... so this matter cannot be resolved by the office," Dr Steele said.

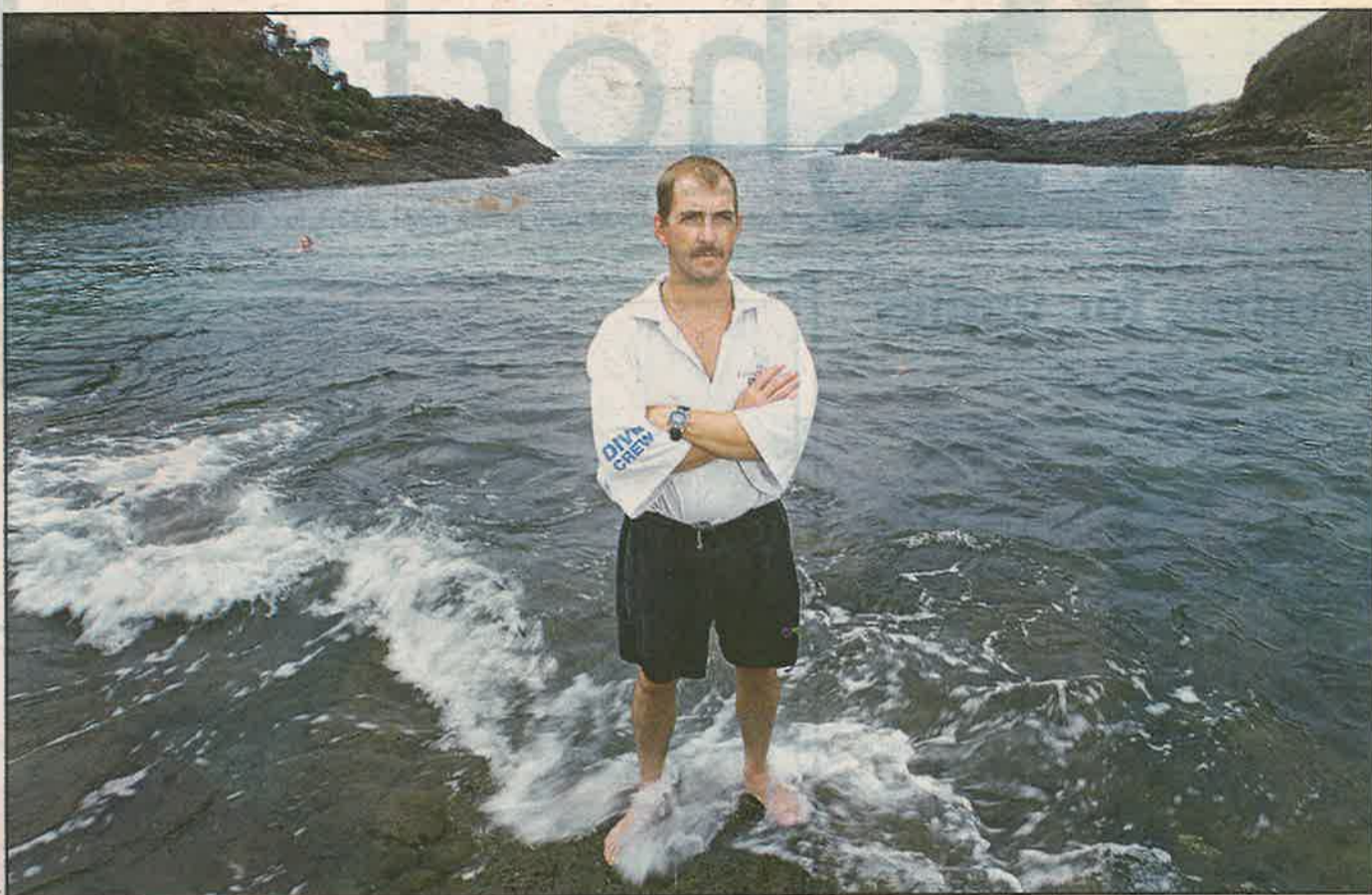
"I hope this contributes to the momentum for the establishment of a national Universities Ombudsman."

Dr Steele said he would still be putting evidence of his claims before April's Federal Government Senate inquiry, which was set up to investigate claims of grade alterations and other anomalies in the education system.

A spokesperson for the University of Wollongong said yesterday that the Ombudsman's report confirmed what Vice-Chancellor Gerard Sutton had been repeatedly saying on the issue - that there had not been a hint of any improper practice.

FULL HOUSE AT UNI - P7

Protected Ralph not on dinner menu



Professional diver Ron Duncan is concerned about an increase in illegal spearfishing at Bushrangers Bay - a protected aquatic reserve. Picture: SYLVIA VINCENT

By DANIELLE WOOLAGE

Illegal spearfishermen have twice tried to turn a magnificent blue groper, affectionately named Ralph, into fish and chips.

But the wily fish, who lives in Bushrangers Bay and is well known to scuba divers, has managed to survive both attacks.

Last Sunday, scuba divers witnessed the fishermen carrying their loaded spear guns into Bushrangers Bay, a protected aquatic reserve since 1982.

The groper - a protected species since 1962 - is also the state's official marine emblem.

Professional diver and charter boat operator Ron Duncan has slammed the actions of the illegal spearfishers who last week tried to catch the friendly fish.

While Ralph managed to escape from his attackers he sustained a massive tear to his flank.

"Ralph is pretty tough," Mr Duncan said.

It is not the first time he has side-stepped illegal spearfishermen.

Ten years ago he suffered a serious stab wound from a spear gun.

"He has a deformed growth on his head from where a chunk was taken out by a spear," Mr Duncan said.

"That is how we recognise him."

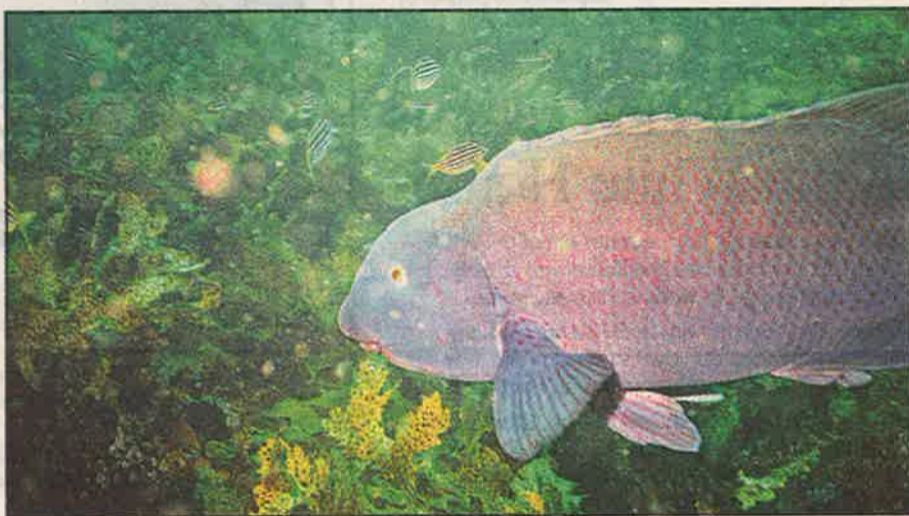
It was the third illegal spearfishing incident Mr Duncan has witnessed in less than two weeks.

Mr Duncan has been diving with Ralph, a fully grown male who tips the scales at 50kg, for the past 14 years and the friendly fish is not afraid of human contact.

The maximum penalty for illegal spearfishing in aquatic reserves is \$1100.

Offenders caught in the bay with a loaded spear gun would either be issued a \$200 on the spot fine or face prosecution, a NSW Fisheries spokesman said.

"Spearfishing in aquatic reserves is self



A blue groper affectionately known as Ralph was the target of an illegal spearfisherman last week.

regulated and education campaigns, including on-site signs, were used to deter the illegal removal of marine life from the reserve," he said.

"But you can never stop anything, you can only make people voluntarily comply with the laws," the fisheries spokesperson said.

"[Fisheries officers] and Bass Point rangers carry out regular patrols but it is impossible to be everywhere at once."

The spokesperson called on the community "with the aid of their mobile phones" to help officers police illegal activities in aquatic reserves.

After March 23 people will be required to have licences to fish in saltwater.

200 treated at concert

Nearly two hundred people were treated for injuries and illness at the Big Day Out concert in Adelaide yesterday, with seven revellers taken to hospital.

A St John Ambulance spokesman said six people were taken to hospital for heat-related conditions while one person suffered a fractured shoulder.

He said up to 200 revellers were treated at the scene for a range of problems.

With temperatures hovering around 40 degrees, the casualty list among the 20,000-plus crowd was expected to be much higher by the midnight finish of the

event, which started at 11am. At last week's Big Day Out in Sydney, 16-year-old Jessica Michalik of Dee Why on Sydney's northern beaches, suffered a heart attack in a crowd crush. She died in hospital on Wednesday.

Adelaide organiser Di Joy said all precautions had been taken to try to protect the crowd from the heat and prevent a similar incident yesterday. She said the crowd was supplied with free water and sunscreen and "mist tents" sprayed water on patrons.

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Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

The 2001-2002 Migration and Humanitarian Programs and Associated Settlement Issues

Public Meeting - Nowra

The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, will be available to talk to members of the public about the formulation of the 2001-2002 Migration and Humanitarian Programs and associated settlement issues:

On: Thursday 15 February 2001
From: 5.00pm - 7.00pm

This will be an opportunity to discuss with the Minister your views on:

- Australia's population future;
- the size and composition of the Migration Program;
- ways of achieving the economic and social objectives of immigration; and
- Australia's Humanitarian Program.

If you wish to attend the meeting, please phone (02) 4423 1782 or 1800 632 697 toll free, give your name (including title), address and organisation (if applicable) and telephone number.

Registration:

Closes Monday 12 February 2001

REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL. PLEASE REGISTER EARLY.

00110

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