

# Wollongong & Northern LEADER

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**Talented youth ready to put on a show**

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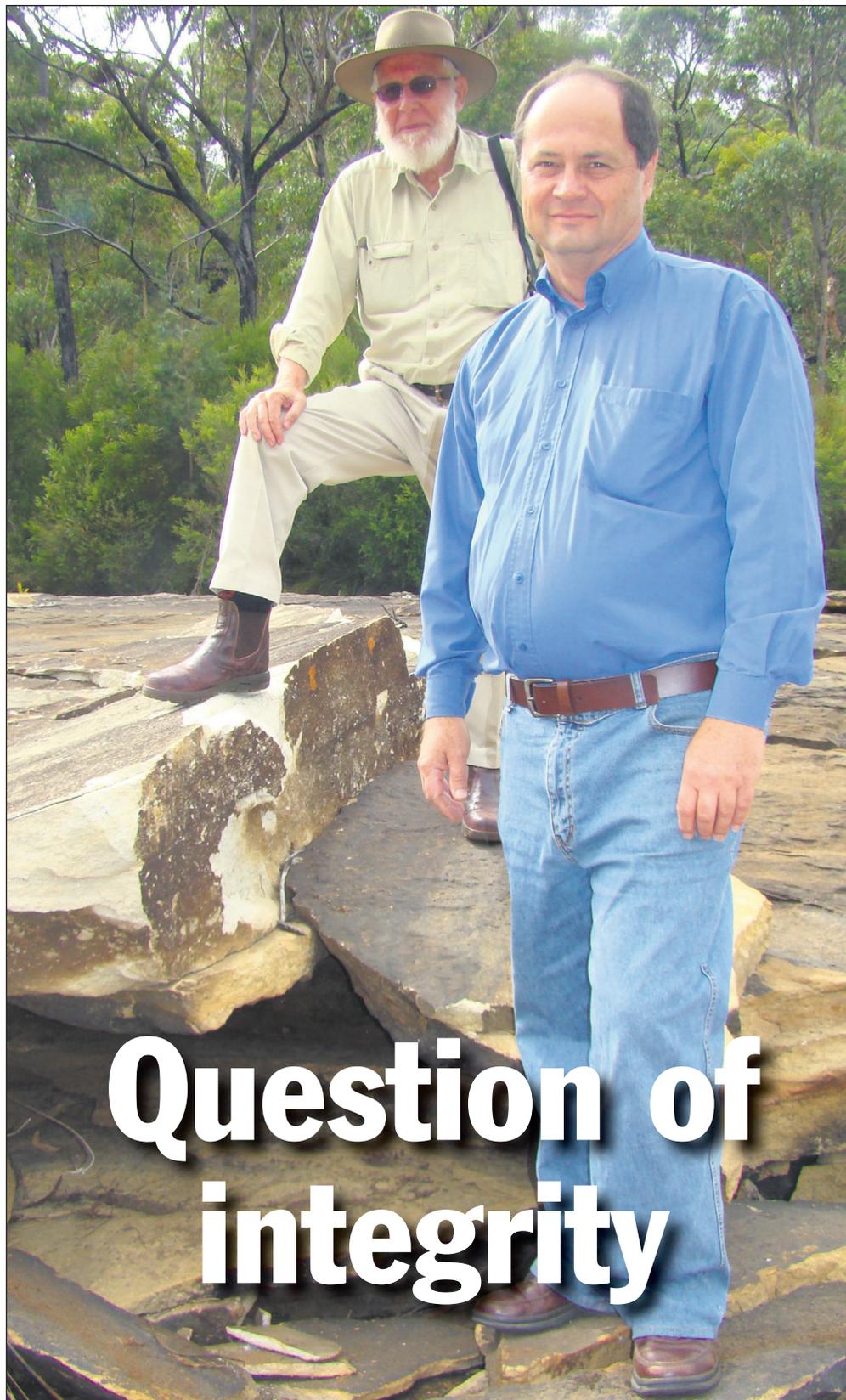
**Special day to make final wishes known**

## SHOWING METAL CREDENTIALS



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**Wollongong band rocks out with 'KK'**



# Question of integrity

THE dramatic subsidence of sandstone rock platforms along the Waratah Rivulet in the Sydney Catchment Area has alarmed experts.

The longwall mining company excavating beneath the site in the Illawarra escarpment, Peabody Energy Australia has a team of construction workers attempting to stop the loss of water by creating a 'polyurethane dam' beneath the surface.

It was forecast that the work would be complete within three months and are still trialling the system 18 months later.

According to the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA), remediation work began years ago.

"This cracking occurred in 2004 and Helensburgh Coal, the former owners of the colliery, began remediation work to parts of the rivulet in May 2005.

The latest process involves drilling 15 metres vertically down into the rock bed and pumping the filler down the holes.

"I agree that this might be the best option, but my concern is that they are placing far too much faith in this system," said former UOW Associate Professor of Geoscience, Dr Bob Young.

Specialising in sandstone terrain, Dr Young said he was shocked by what he saw last week during a tour with SCA employees.

"I have never seen that level of disruption on a sandstone bed," he said.

"Once the rocks below the surface are fractured the permeability is altered."

Four hundred metres below the surface, the mine-bed is created by a machine that cuts horizontally across sections three metres high.

According to Dr Young mining causes subsidence of more than one metre at the surface, resulting in extensive shattering of the sandstone and draining of water from the stream bed.

"I suspect there could be substantial losses (of water). My concern is that we don't know enough about it," Dr Young said.

The lack of water flowing along the rivulet to feed the Woronora Dam was shocking to the organiser of the SCA tour, Independent candidate for Heathcote, Greg Petty.

"We are told that the water is not flowing above the surface, but going beneath the rock and resurfacing a few metres down stream," Mr Petty said.

"We would need to see the other pools to know if that is the case," he said.

Meanwhile the Woronora Dam levels are the lowest of the major 11 SCA dams, measuring 31.4 per cent last week.

According to the authority, low rainfall and releases of more than 4.1 million litres each day for environmental purposes is the cause.

"SCA investigations indicate there is no evidence to suggest that mining activity has affected the water levels in Woronora Dam in a substantial way," a SCA spokesperson said.

• **Concerned:** Former UOW Associate Professor of GeoScience Dr Bob Young with Independent candidate for Heathcote Greg Petty with some of the sandstone rocks in a dry pool of the Waratah Rivulet that feeds the Woronora Dam.

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