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Students from Newhaven College planting mangroves to control the erosion which can be seen behind them.

## Students in erosion control at Grantville

THE mangroves between Pioneer Bay and Grantville were all cut down and burnt many years ago. The ash was mixed with mutton fat to make soap.

Dr Tim Ealey, a highly acclaimed environmental expert who lives in the area, said analysis of the growth rings in the remaining stumps indicates that these trees were over 60 years old. Since then massive erosion has occurred.

"A substantial rock wall was built to stop this erosion but it was smashed by the waves which the mangroves had previously resisted," he said.

"In contrast, the coast adjacent to Pioneer Bay where mangroves are prolific is actually extending, not eroding.

"The cost of another wall to protect this 3km of coast would be prohibitive, especially currently, and might suffer the same fate as the previous wall. "Anyway, it would be useless with rising sea levels whereas mangroves would adapt.

"There is really no other financially viable way."

He said those people who pull up the plants in vandalism attacks are doing a great community disservice.

"In New South Wales, the penalty is \$110,000. Mangroves in Queensland contribute \$8380 per hectare to commercial fisheries."

Dr Ealey, who recently was awarded the OAM for his environmental work, represents the Western Port Seagrass Partnership.

He is organising the efforts of students and volunteers to grow mangroves and plant a protective barrier along the Grantville coast.

"The Bass Valley Primary School had all their plants pulled out by a vandal last year but now has a hot house full of mangroves ready to plant soon in another place," Dr Ealey said.

"Tertiary students from RMIT and NMIT came all the way from Melbourne to transplant seedlings from Pioneer Bay.

"Newhaven College students planted nearly one hundred seedlings which they had raised in milk cartons which they brought in from home. Companies Big M and Visy donate thousands of milk cartons to the mangrove program."

Students in eight schools as far away as Narre Warren and Pakenham are geared up to germinate seedlings which are ripen-

ing and will nurture them for the next year.

The owners of the French View caravan park are already germinating mangrove seeds as is Peter Coffey, a member of the Corinella Probus Club.

Jenny Jackson from Phillip Island has been collecting many thousands of seeds.

A permit is not required to pick mangrove seeds and Dr Ealey will assist anyone who wishes to grow them to protect their property or simply to assist the project.

"It is now an essential major erosion control program," he said.

There will be two Coast Action/Coast Care Summer By the Sea events collecting seeds and growing them at Pioneer Bay on January 5 and 18 from 9.30am to 1pm.

The Western Port Seagrass Partnership has just been awarded a \$41,131 'Australian Caring for Country' grant for erosion protection at Grantville.

It is already enjoying a \$90,000 EPA 'Diverted Penalties' grant for its erosion control work using mangroves and a \$5000 annual donation from Parklea Developments.