The Last Line of Defence

RODGER TOMLINSON

Sea walls are a very common feature around the coast lines of the world. You see them absolutely everywhere and they range from massive concrete structures to geo tech style bags, and everything in between.

On the Gold Coast we have a sea wall and I don’t think a lot of people realize this and it is called the A line and it runs the full length of the Gold Coast but you can’t see it anywhere because its buried and its there in sense as the last line of defense against major erosion.

BRIAN MCGRATH

In the 1920’s people were very concerned about the Nerang River breaking through again at Narrow Neck so there were some timber groynes were built early on and then some boulders placed there.

There is photographic evidence that when the Kirra Surf pavilion was built, just before it was opened in 1936 there was a major weather event and waves broke over the top of it and they were concerned about losing that so they built a boulder wall in front there.

When we built the boulder wall post the ’67 cyclone at Greenmount, we found an old log wall built of ti tree logs along there that someone had built, lord knows when.

FRANK GOETSH

A lot of people have trouble understanding that specially, that didn’t experience those early cyclones, like out here at Greenmount, is what they call a COG Wall, it was designed by the Coordinators Generals Department which we put in ‘68 after the ‘67 cyclone and I was on that from Surfers, Main Beach Broadbeach Miami.

Main Beach you could fish off the wall there in front of what was called the old San Soucci, it was a private hospital on the northern end of Main Beach and you can speak to people now and they just don’t understand that there was no sand there, it was just water.

BRIAN MCGRATH

After that series of storms the Gold Coast could not stand another year of that sort of weather. The decision was made to build boulder walls in those places of public infrastructure necessity and about 3 kilometers of them were done.

ANGUS JACKSON

The Gold Coast boulder wall is a standard, it was developed as what survived 72. there was a design for a boulder wall in ’67, some those walls failed in ’72. The surveyors went out and measured what survived and that became the new benchmark.

RODGER TOMLINSON

The A line was exposed all the way along the southern end of the Gold Coast when we get the major storms between 1972 and ’74 and clearly was the major factor in that erosion not being worse and further property damage.

More recently with some of the storms we have had in the ’90s and 2000’s, certain parts of the Gold Coast, again the walls have been exposed and has played a role in preventing further erosion and property damage.

FRANK GOETSH

So what we did was, if you want to build on the beach front you have to have a boulder wall and people argue and say Why?. It is to protect their property and also to protect lives of the SES and Gold Coast workers who don’t have to be out there protecting property and the esplanades.
RODGER TOMLINSON So the strategy on the Gold Coast is we have our reference point which is the A line, its our last line of defence, and in front of that we keep a beach as wide as we possibly can by beach nourishment

The storm comes the beach erodes, we have that sea wall there to prevent the property damage behind it and it is part of a more integrated approach to coastal management

BRIAN MCGRATH We are really in a wonderful position now at the Gold Coast in that we got beaches we got dunes and if anything really happened that we can’t foresee, most areas have got the boulder wall as a fall back so you’re not gonna loose the property.

ANGUS JACKSON While don’t ever want to see them, we want to make sure that they’re are unseen wall. We want to make sure that when we do get the huge event that they protect our infrastructure and we don’t want to lose esplanades again.