

# What a beach: Hyams' status as whitest downgraded

Being able to promote your local beach as having the whitest sand in the world is a pretty handy marketing tool and Shoalhaven City Council is defending Hyams Beach at Jervis Bay against claims it no longer holds the title – in either Australia or the world.

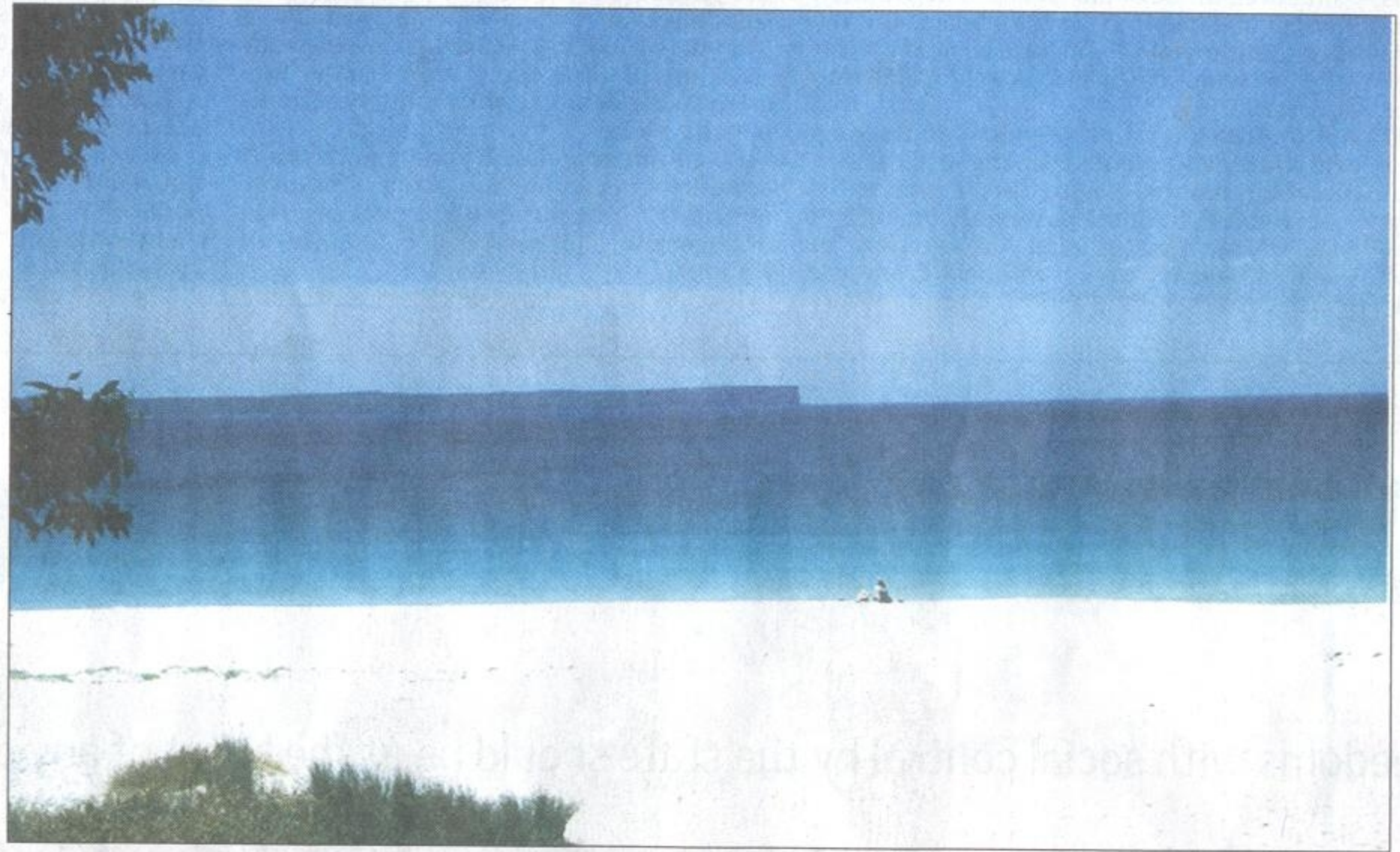
First, Siesta Key in Florida is claiming to have the whitest and finest sand in the world. And now, a national committee of scientific experts has knocked Hyams Beach down to having the *fifth* whitest sand in Australia, a result which might cause many Canberrans holidaying there to howl in protest.

The National Committee on Soils and Terrain last month named Lucky Bay in the Cape Le Grand National Park in Western Australia as being the whitest beach in the nation.

Second was Tallebudgera Beach near the Gold Coast in Queensland, equal with Hellfire Bay, also in Western Australia. Fourth was Victoria's Squeaky Beach near Wilson's Promontory, followed by Hyams Beach, then Tasmania's Boat Harbour, Main Brambie Island near Darwin and a city beach at Adelaide.

Samples from each beach were sent to Geoscience Australia in Canberra for an anonymous visual assessment by 10 judges from across the nation. (All done out of hours – no misuse of government funds here).

Committee chair **Noel Schoknecht**, a senior research officer with the Department of Agriculture and Food in WA, said the whiteness of beaches depended on the presence of quartz or coral and the contenders were all quartz-based. There were no entries from North Queensland coral beaches



**MAKING WAVES:** Hyams Beach at Jervis Bay has been lowered to fifth in Australia in terms of whitest and finest sand.

which might have been serious contenders for the title.

Schoknecht said yesterday the 10 judges unanimously selected Lucky Bay as the whitest beach but he was happy to reopen the testing if there was an official protest from Hyams Beach.

"We can take on more samples and we can review it. If people think they've been diddled, it's open there to be challenged," he said.

Shoalhaven City Council tourism manager Tom Phillips is undaunted by the results, saying Hyams Beach will continue to be promoted as

having the whitest sand in the world. The honour was apparently enshrined in the *Guinness Book of Records* at some point, although that couldn't be confirmed yesterday and some were suggesting it might simply be "folklore".

"There's a few contestants coming out of the woodwork now and we're basically saying, 'Look bring them on, we'll take on anyone, we don't care'," Phillips said.

The kudos from having the whitest sand was something worth

fighting for, drawing in plenty of tourists. "It's like Canberra's the nation's capital, you have to see it. It just gives us a tagline," Phillips said. "People like the idea of white sand because it basically means that everything is pure and clean and pristine."

Channel Seven's travel show *The Great Outdoors* is interested in the debate, sending presenter **Andrew Daddo** to Jervis Bay today and tomorrow to film a story about the whitest sand in the world claims. The program should go to air sometime from mid-February.