

Swiss family getting on top of climate change

By MICHELLE HARRIS

NEWCASTLE is the latest stop for a Swiss family of four, travelling the world's oceans and highest peaks in an effort to spread a message about climate change.

Dario and Sabine Schwörer and their children Salina, 2, and Andri, 1, are travelling the world aboard their 50-foot yacht Pachamama, which means Mother Earth in Incan.

The couple began the journey in 2002, with their children both born in Patagonia along the way.

They are aiming to climb the highest summits on each continent and have been staying at the Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club before their attempt to climb Mount Kosciuszko next month.

They have already climbed a number of summits, including Mont Blanc and Aconcagua.

The journey began when Mr Schwörer, an international mountain guide, became concerned about the effects of climate change.

"I saw my office melting so I wanted to do something," he said.

With help from friends and sponsors, they started the not-for-profit Toptop Global Climate Expedition, which has the endorsement of the United Nations Environment Program.

Their boat has solar panels and wind generators to encourage others to turn to renewable energy.

Mr Schwörer said the family's message was intended to be positive, about what individuals could do to help the environment.

They visit schools to speak with students about their mission.

It has not all been smooth sailing. They spent nearly a year repairing their vessel in Patagonia after it collided with a floating container in southern seas, damaging the rudder.



Mr Schwörer said the family had learnt about exciting environmental projects under way across the globe.

They had also learnt to appreciate taking it slowly and savouring life.

"Everything in Switzerland is so busy, whereas in other cultures they take time to enjoy life," he said.

They will return to Newcastle after their climb.

To view their journey visit www.toptotop.org. Schools that want to arrange a visit can email dario@toptotop.org.



TOP STUFF: Dario and Sabine Schwörer with children Salina and Andri at Newcastle's marina, with their custom-built yacht, left. The family is travelling the world to spread the message about the damages of climate change.

— Pictures by Kitty Hill

Tillegra Dam plans lodged

By JASON GORDON

HUNTER Water has formally lodged with the State Government an application to build Tillegra Dam near Dungog.

The application was lodged with the Department of Planning last Wednesday along with a detailed "preliminary environmental assessment" which paints an intricate picture of the dam's potential environmental effects and how Hunter Water plans to combat them.

The report identifies 20 kilometres of riverine habitat which will probably be lost when the dam is built. It also recognises the dam could have significant impacts on fish species, tidal flows in rivers and the availability of agricultural land, along with causing potential loss of life and

Council seeks funding help for project

LODGEMENT of Hunter Water's preliminary environmental assessment was the trigger for Dungog Shire Council to start looking for financial assistance from the NSW Government to manage the Tillegra Dam project.

General manager Craig Deasey said the proposal was already a drain on council resources and it

was having an economic impact on the shire.

"We need experienced personnel looking at the issues," Mr Deasey said.

The council is looking to the meeting of the whole-of-government reference group, scheduled for December, to put its case for contributions.

extensive property damage if the dam wall failed.

The dam would also have a visual impact, the report says, and the potential of finding threatened plant species is also possible during the planning phases.

"Experience has indicated that

there is a range of potential ecological impacts on aquatic flora and fauna," the report, prepared by consultancy firm Connell Wagner, said.

Among them are the movement of sediment into waterways during dam construction, the loss of fish habitat, the creation of arti-



IMPACT: How the planned Tillegra Dam would look.

ficial lake and still water environments, changes to the natural flow of the Williams River, the creation of barriers to the movement of fish, changes to aquatic habitat and food chains.

The study has already identified 73 items of contemporary heritage significance.

Hunter Water's project manager for Tillegra, Nicole Holmes, said the preliminary environmental assessment aims to provide a solid outline of the project for the department's director-general.

"This has been about identifying key issues that need further investigation," Ms Holmes said.

The application lodged with the state department also shows Hunter Water has acquired 75 per cent of the land it needs to build Tillegra Dam.

Rescued boat people reach island

SIXTEEN Indonesians rescued from a leaking fishing boat in the Timor Sea have arrived at Christmas Island, where they will be assessed by immigration officials.

The three men, three women and 10 children were rescued by Australian

Navy ships on Tuesday after their stricken vessel pulled up alongside the Jabiru Venture oil ship, 600 kilometres west of Darwin.

The families, from the Indonesian island of Roti, said they had suffered economic losses from Australia's crackdown on illegal

fishing in the region and had no choice but to flee their homeland.

A spokesman for the Immigration Department confirmed the Indonesians arrived at Christmas Island yesterday after being taken there aboard HMAS Tobruk.

Chief wins top gong

HUNTER Integrated Care (HIC) chief executive Peter Rothnie has been honoured at Friday night's Not-for-Profit Network's annual awards on the Gold Coast, where he has been named chief executive of the year.

HICI, formed from four community services in 1999, supports the disadvantaged in the Hunter offering services such as respite care, activity centres, adult training and learning, aged care and dementia services.

AAP



LAKE MACQUARIE BUSINESS NETWORK BREAKFAST

DATE: Wednesday 5 December 2007

TIME: 7.00am - 8.30am

VENUE: Milano's on the Lake
89 Soldiers Road,
Pelican

GUEST SPEAKER: Bob Johnson
Business Consultant &
Training Facilitator

TOPIC: *'Tis the Season to make Merry and Money...*

Bob Johnson is a widely experienced corporate trainer and experienced business and management consultant with a commitment to the achievement of company goals, as well as the development of personnel.

At Christmas, many businesses generate 80% of their annual net profit, Bob Johnson will share his business expertise to allow you to maximise this opportunity.

In business, don't scrimp on service just because it's a busy time at Christmas, customer service and professionalism are even more important than ever at this time. Learn the value of merchandising/advertising, add-ons, accessories, related goods or services etc.

BUSINESS PROFILE: Mr Colin Law - Area Manager
Commonwealth Bank of Australia

COST: \$28.00 (including GST)
(Includes full breakfast)

RSVP: Please note registrations must close Friday, 30 November 2007 (Bookings and pre payment essential)

PHONE: Cheryl Riha, Economic Development LMCC 4921 0309

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