

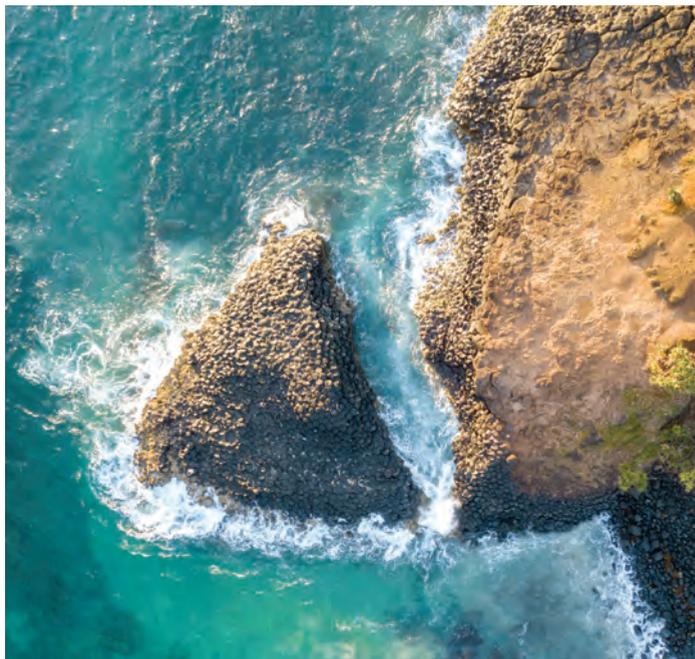
Pooningbah | Fingal Head

Fingal Head is a distinctive volcanic headland of rectangular basalt columns, formed as lava flowed toward the ocean 23 million years ago. The nature of the cooling lava formed the giant columns.

Aboriginal people maintain strong cultural and community connections to the Fingal peninsula, known as Pooningbah, place of the echidna. Basalt columns at the tip of the headland formed when the Pooning (echidna) was chased into the ocean.

Cook Island, just off Fingal, is the ceremonial ground of the Jungurra, the pelican. A Bundjalung story connects the island with Joongarrabah (Razorback), the highest point in nearby Tweed Heads.

Although much of the Fingal peninsula was cleared for sandmining during the 1960s and early 1970s, a number of areas were spared, including a significant area of the critically endangered littoral rainforest to the south of the headland and a number of endangered coastal wetlands associated



with Wommin Lake, Wommin Lagoon and Sponsors Lagoon. These, and adjacent areas, provide habitat for many plants and animals, including numerous species identified as threatened with extinction.

One of these species is a tree known as the stinking cryptocarya (*Cryptocarya foetida*) named because of the offensive odour of the small creamy flowers, which are borne in small clusters. The littoral rainforest to the south of Fingal Head is thought to support the largest known

population of this species.

Since sandmining ceased in the 1970s most of the areas previously cleared have been regenerated and the local community continues to actively assist in this environmental repair work. In particular, over several decades the Fingal Coastcare group have greatly expanded the area of littoral rainforest.

Photographer Ryan Fowler