

COAST & COUNTRY

Ken cleans up at awards



A 10-YEAR commitment to the health of Tumbulgum's natural environment has earned Ken Matsuto the title of NSW Clean Up Australia Day Local Hero.

"He has actually participated in Clean Up Australia Day every day for the last 10 years," chairman Ian Kiernan AO said recently announcing the Local Hero Awards.

"He is always running along the riverbank of the village picking up rubbish on his journey. He sets a great example to his community."

Nominees for Local Hero Awards must have participated in at least 10 Clean Up Australia Days.

"Clean Up Australia Day Local Hero Award winners in each state are the driving force behind the national event.

"These are the people that do a lot of hard work behind the scenes and often go unrecognised," Mr Kieran said.

"This award aims to go some way to thanking them for all their years of dedication to the Clean Up Australia Day effort.

"As the 20-year anniversary of Clean Up Australia Day approached, it was important to recognise those who have been the heart and soul of the hugely successful community event."

Mr Matsuto received a three-day, eco-friendly break for two, donated by TakeABreak and a \$600 travel voucher courtesy of Veolia Environment.

Mr Matsuto was born in Japan and after school joined the army and was also a Greco Roman wrestler (Olympic style).

He met Beth Jagers, who was working in Japan, married her in 1991 and they travelled the world.

In 1994 they moved to Tumbulgum from where Mr Matsuto taught Japanese at Southport TAFE.

He now also sumo wrestles on the Gold Coast each Tuesday and Thursday and is a member of the Australian Sumo Wrestling Federation.

He is a handyman, keeps fit at the gym, and helps out at Tumbulgum school, especially informing students about Japan.

As a ritual Mr Matsuto walks his dog each morning, keeping the village neat and tidy, picking up rubbish.

The Matsutos have one daughter.