

Man sought over assault

POLICE are appealing for information after a woman was assaulted at Terrigal.

Police said a man approached an 18-year-old woman near a surf club on Terrigal Esplanade about 1.30am on Sunday.

He followed her to the water's edge and indecently assaulted her.

The male offender is described as Caucasian, mid to late 20s, 183 centimetres tall, large build, dark short hair and bushy eyebrows.

Crimestoppers
1800 333 000

Dingoes may be weapons

DINGOES don't mix well with sheep and cattle but scientists believe there may be benefit to keeping wild dogs around to control feral pests.

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre is investigating the ecological role dingoes and free-ranging crossbreed dogs play in Australia, so they can be effectively managed.

Peter Fleming, who leads CRC projects on managing wild dogs, says some people see them as under-utilised weapons against feral cats and foxes. Others see them as destructive pests.

AAP

Legal derailment

Coal train drivers to face action

By ANNA PATTY

TWO coal giants have taken the highly unusual step of threatening legal action against union workers involved in a pay dispute with a different company.

Train drivers who work for Pacific National Coal – part of Asciano, Australia's largest rail freight and port operator – are threatening to go on strike after salary negotiations collapsed.

Now Xstrata Coal NSW, which is not involved in the salary negotiations, is threatening legal action against the workers if they strike. The threat was put in writing to the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) last week.

Xstrata's chief operating officer, Ian Cribb, wrote that his company had contracts with Pacific National for rail freight of 30 million tonnes of coal each year from its mines in the Hunter Valley and Tahmoor, south-west of Sydney.

"If any industrial action is organised by the RTBU, and engaged in by its members employed by Pacific National



LINED UP: Pacific National Coal drivers have been threatened with legal action if they strike.

Coal, it will cause significant harm to the business of Xstrata Coal," he said.

"Xstrata Coal is entitled to take all necessary steps to prevent any harm to its business.

"This may include the commencement of proceedings in a court or tribunal to stop or prevent industrial action from being taken without further notice to the RTBU."

A third company, Whitehaven Coal, has also threatened to make a com-

plaint to the Fair Work Commission.

The union's national secretary, Bob Nanva, said it was "unheard of" for a third party not directly involved in an industrial dispute to threaten legal action. He said the strike action would be protected, having been approved by Fair Work Australia.

"This is a co-ordinated assault on the right of union members to collectively bargain and strike," he said.

"This is a forerunner to what

will happen if Tony Abbott is elected Prime Minister later this year. These companies are straining at the leash and desperately want to bring back WorkChoices."

University of Sydney emeritus professor Ron McCallum, who specialises in industrial law, said it was unlikely the union could be successfully sued if it was taking protected strike action, unless it had failed to satisfy all legal requirements under the Fair Work Act.



BERNARD McGRATH

Hearing date set

FORMER St John of God Catholic brother Bernard McGrath will face an extradition hearing in April in relation to child sex offences allegedly committed in the Hunter.

The Australian government is seeking Mr McGrath's extradition from New Zealand so he can answer 252 child sexual assault charges from his time in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese in the 1970s and '80s.

Mr McGrath, 65, who faced a New Zealand court yesterday, is accused of raping, molesting and abusing dozens of boys.

He voluntarily returned to New Zealand from Sri Lanka last year after learning about the charges, but has indicated that he will fight the extradition in the Christchurch District Court.

His lawyer said April 12 was agreed with the Australian government's representatives for the