

SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP INC.

councils caring for the coastal environment



TAPPING INTO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE FORUM REPORT PORT MACQUARIE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2013



2013



2100?

professional development workshop #1



Tapping into local knowledge:
better community engagement
in coastal planning



ACS

Australian Coastal Society Ltd

TAPPING INTO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE REPORT CARD

Date: Tuesday 12 November
Place: Port Macquarie Surf Lifesaving Club
Time: 12:30 – 4:30pm
Speakers: 6
Participants: 25
Organisations:



Councils	Other organisations	
Australian Coastal Society		
Byron Shire Council	ABC Mid-North Coast Radio	Royal HaskoningDHV
Gosford City Council	Australian Coastal Society	State Emergency Services
Greater Taree City Council	Coastal Environment Pty Ltd	Sydney Coastal Councils Group
Lake Macquarie City Council	NSW Department of Finance & Services (Land & Property Information)	Umwelt
Pittwater Council	NSW Office of Environment & Heritage	University of New South Wales
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	NSW Trade & Investment	
Shellharbour City Council	Risk Frontiers	

AGENDA	
Registration & Lunch	
Welcome / Introduction (Geoff Withycombe SCCG & Tom Fitzgerald ACS)	
Clr Lisa Intemann Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	Political issues and community engagement for coastal management - the PMHC experience.
Cameron Marshall ABC Mid-North Coast Radio	Media reporting of local issues, balanced arguments, sound-bites, press releases and outspoken community members.
Dr Sheridan Coakes Umwelt	Introduction to the theory of risk perception, outrage management, understanding the community and conflict resolution.
Dr Alice Howe Lake Macquarie City Council	<u>Case Study 1:</u> Learning from climate adaptation planning at the coast. How to get past the fear, anger, outrage and denial to some clear community thinking and good strategic planning.
Tim MacDonald Gosford City Council	<u>Case Study 2:</u> Dealing with vested interests, contrasting perceptions and key lessons from media engagement. Maintaining momentum within an organisation.
Richard Pamplin Greater Taree City Council	<u>Case Study 3:</u> The Old Bar experience – dealing with interest groups, the media, government agencies, Planned Retreat and coastal solutions within a politically charged environment.
Panel discussion (Facilitated by Dr Sheridan Coakes)	
Afternoon Tea	
Dr Sheridan Coakes Umwelt	<u>Workshop:</u> Use of a theoretical scenario to apply community engagement theory to a local government area. Groups to develop a communication and engagement process, with discussion following about the best elements, what doesn't work and why.
Evaluation & Close	

1 INTRODUCTION

Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) and the NSW Branch of the Australian Coastal Society (ACS) are pleased to report on the outcomes of 'Tapping into Local Knowledge: Better Community Engagement in Coastal Planning'. This inaugural Forum was held in partnership with environmental consultants Umwelt and is the first in a series of professional development workshops for coastal managers jointly organised by the SCCG and NSW Branch of the ACS.

The Forum was held in Port Macquarie on 12 November 2013, immediately prior to the [22nd annual NSW Coastal Conference](#). The Forum attracted twenty-five participants, from State Government agencies, local Councils, academia and environmental consultancies.



The aim of the Forum was to build capacity in stakeholder and community engagement amongst coastal planning and management practitioners. This was achieved by sharing learnings on community engagement theory and best practice from around NSW, in the context of communicating complex and challenging coastal risk issues.

Presentations were received from a range of stakeholders with varying experiences of community engagement theory and practice - from a local elected representative and a radio host, to a specialist social analysis and engagement practitioner. Case studies were also presented from three regional councils.

2 CONTEXT

Public involvement in coastal management is mandated in a number of NSW laws. The *Coastal Protection Act 1979* and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (and successor) require public engagement in the preparation of coastal zone management plans, strategic plans, local environment plans and in the development application process. Public participation is also required by the *Crown Lands Act 1989*, *Local Government Act 1993* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* to support the preparation of Plans of Management for public land which may be gazetted as reserve, national park, State park or State conservation area.

Approximately 85 per cent of Australians live within 50km of the coast, reflecting high demand for coastal living and strong interest in coastal management decisions. This results in the potential for conflict between stakeholders and the possibility of outrage about decisions that are perceived to benefit some above others. Public involvement is a fundamental component when making coastal management decisions and is often pointed to as a mechanism for improving the acceptability of difficult coastal management choices.

3 FORUM STRUCTURE

The Forum was split into two sessions: the first a series of presentations followed by a panel discussion and the second a participatory workshop. Biographies and synopses of the speakers and their presentations are provided in the following pages.

Session 1: Forum Presentations

The Forum consisted of six speakers - two local speakers to open proceedings and set the scene, an engagement practice specialist to provide technical context and three practitioners from local government.

a. Setting the scene – stakeholder and media perspectives on community involvement and outrage:

Councillor Lisa Intemann of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council shared her experience managing community expectations as an elected representative of her local area.

Cameron Marshall of ABC Mid-North Coast Radio described way to effectively engage with people through the media.

b. Engagement practice specialist

Dr Sheridan Coakes from Umwelt Environmental Consultants provided an overview of community risk perception and strategies to better understand the motivation of stakeholders and design a constructive engagement process which circumvents outrage responses.

c. Local government case studies

Dr Alice Howe of Lake Macquarie City Council, **Tim MacDonald** of Gosford City Council & **Richard Pamplin** of Greater Taree City Council each described their experiences of public involvement in high profile and complex coastal management actions they are undertaking.

d. Panel discussion

At the conclusion of the forum, a brief panel discussion was undertaken. Key themes arising out of this discussion were the need to understand the preferences and characteristics of the community, the use of partnerships, inclusiveness and representation, and using thresholds or triggers in planning.



Discussion also focused on the practicalities of planned retreat, particularly around the legal mechanisms available (including development consent triggers and s.149 certificates), questions of fair compensation and the ongoing provision of Council services to affected properties.

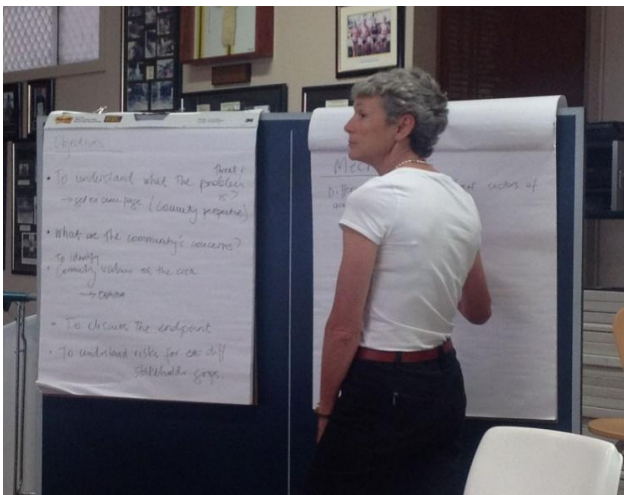
In response to comments about inconsistent or unresponsive State Government involvement in coastal planning matters, OEH representatives also asked the speakers to

nominate their priorities for improved State Government support. The feedback included calls for:

- consistent benchmarks
- using the adaptation hub to provide advice
- additional research on “nuisance” inundation, not just the more extreme events
- facilitating partnerships with and between small councils
- provision of resources to enhance research capability
- making better use of the many well researched and useful submissions made by Local Government.

Session 2: Participatory Workshop

The second session used a specific coastal management scenario to workshop the requirements for successful community engagement in coastal planning and management. Groups were asked to scope elements of the engagement process that could be suited to the issues in the scenario, focusing on defining objectives and identifying suitable engagement mechanisms. Outcomes of the workshop are provided later in this report.



4 BIOGRAPHIES AND SYNOPSES

Presenter: Clr Lisa Intemann
Organisation: Port Macquarie Hastings Council

Biography: Clr Lisa Intemann was first elected to Council in September 1995 and has held several portfolios in the areas of planning, development and the environment. She is Chair of the Coasts and Estuary Committee and served as the Local Government representative to the Mid North Coast Catchment Board for three years from 2000. Clr Intemann achieved a research doctorate in philosophy in 2012, is a trained mediator and also directs a local retail business in Port Macquarie.

Synopsis: Clr Intemann highlighted a Councillor's role as the link between the community and decision-makers. She noted how conflict arises between individual interests and shared or common interests. Her presentation examined the role of community engagement in conflict resolution and, in particular, the channels that Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has used to engage with the local community, such as local papers, public exhibitions, individual negotiations and consultation sessions.

Presenter: Cameron Marshall, MBA, B.Bus
Organisation: ABC Mid-North Coast Radio

Biography: Cameron Marshall is the Regional Content Manager at ABC Mid-North Coast and presents a daily breakfast program. He has been a radio presenter and manager with ABC for over twenty years.

Synopsis: Cameron spoke of the need to have a clear message that is succinct, timely and targeted to a specific audience, though understandable by everyone. He noted the effectiveness of humour in engaging an audience and communicating information. This is important as the media has a specific role to play as 'filter' of sorts between experts and the community. Stories require a 'hook' or specific angle that provides an indication of historical context, current issue, and the way forward. The journalist's requirement for a fair and balanced view of an issue can sometimes be clouded by over-representation of the 'vocal minority'. Where people are reluctant to speak out, other less confrontational forms of media can play a role, such as social media or anonymous forums.

Presenter: Dr Sheridan Coakes
Organisation: Umwelt

Biography: Dr Sheridan Coakes has over 15 years' research and applied experience in the areas of social impact assessment and community involvement. She is currently Practice Leader, Social Assessment and Community Engagement at environmental consultants Umwelt. She has practiced social impact assessment and community consultation for a diverse range of issues within the environmental management sector and played a leading role in using social assessment in the forestry sector for the Commonwealth Government. Sheridan has published numerous papers and books on social assessment and community involvement and is recognised as an industry thought leader in her field.

Synopsis: Sheridan provided an overview of risk perception and community outrage from a social scientist/psychological point of view. She unpacked the different facets that go into the framing of an individual's and a community's shared perception of risk, and spoke of the many aspects of conflict – what it is, what it's not, where it comes from, types and magnitude, and approaches to resolving conflict. She also discussed community outrage in the context of hazards such as those that coastal managers and council are facing in relation to storm surges and beach erosion. Key

factors influencing outrage were identified as trust, knowledge, voluntariness, inclusiveness, whether the hazard was industrial or natural, the hazard's familiarity and immediacy, and perceptions of control and democracy.

Presentation slides:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/01_dr_sheridan_coakes.pdf

Presenter: Dr Alice Howe
Organisation: Lake Macquarie City Council

Biography: Alice is an environmental engineer with over 18 years' experience in environmental management, specialising in water engineering and estuarine wetland rehabilitation. Alice is currently Lake Macquarie City Council's Sustainability Manager, responsible for a wide range of sustainability programs delivered across one of the most populous local government areas in NSW. Alice is also a national board member of the College of Environmental Engineers and the Sustainable Engineering Society.

Synopsis: Alice presented a brief overview of Lake Macquarie City Council's experience developing policy and programs to adapt to projected sea level rise. She highlighted survey work that analysed the community's perception of climate change before outlining how the Council has gone about developing their first Local Adaptation Plan. Alice highlighted the good, the bad and the ugly aspects of their community engagement process. She highlighted the importance of collaboration and one-on-one conversations and support from the majority in Council. She also noted a number of coincidental events (such as insurance premium rises), and vocal community spokespeople that complicated the community engagement process.

Presentation slides:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/02_dr_alice_howe.pdf

Presenter: Tim MacDonald
Organisation: Gosford City Council

Biography: Over the past fifteen years, Tim has worked in a range of environmental, strategic planning and management roles within state and local government as well as the private sector. Tim is currently Manager, of the Integrated Planning Unit at Gosford City Council where he specialises in coastal zone, waterway and natural area management. Prior to this, Tim headed the Manly Council Natural Resources Branch, overseeing management and policy for the sustainability, water cycle management, coastal, estuary and floodplain management fields. As part of this work he has gained considerable experience in the use of techniques to engage the community and involve stakeholders in the management planning process.

Synopsis: Tim provided an overview of Gosford City Council's coastal zone management program, highlighting the varied nature of the Gosford coastline, and Council's ambition to strategically plan for rising sea levels. Tim provided insight into past engagement processes and challenges faced, highlighting the difficulty in planning for climate change risks in an uncertain legal and political environment. Tim provided tips on community engagement methods ('keep your friends close, and your enemies closer') for public participation, media bites and internal communications, and handling uncertainty.

Presentation slides:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/03_tim_macdonald.pdf

Presenter: Richard Pamplin
Organisation: Greater Taree City Council

Biography: Richard Pamplin is Greater Taree City Council's Senior Leader Strategic Planning. Richard leads Council's Landuse Planning and Environmental Services Team which deals with a wide spectrum of issues ranging from coastal management and planning, land use zoning, waterways management including acid sulfate soils and river stabilisation, through to conservation, reserves and heritage. His work also involves managing Council's premier environmental site, Cattai Wetlands. Richard is currently working to update Council's Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan.

Synopsis: Richard spoke about dealing with interest groups, the media, government agencies, and coastal solutions within a politically charged environment. Drawing upon the experience in Old Bar, where coastal erosion threatens numerous properties, Richard highlighted the difficulty of finding solutions to environmental problems when there are different interest groups at hand. Richard highlighted the sensitivity of planned retreat and spoke of the need to use the media to your advantage.

Presentation slides:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/04_richard_pamplin.pdf

5 PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

The workshop component of the afternoon used a fictional case study of a coastal village with multiple management issues and a diverse community structure as the basis for discussion of the application of the theory of good engagement practice to a complex situation. Most participants recognised elements of their local area and their experience in managing coastal issues in the case study.

The participants worked in five groups to scope elements of the engagement process that could be suited to the issues in the case study, focusing on two key areas:

- defining the objectives community engagement and
- identify suitable engagement mechanisms.

The outcomes of the discussion are summarised below.

Objectives	Mechanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand what the threat or problem is, from the community perspective (not the same as the perspective of Council or a proponent) • To clarify the community values and concerns that influence their response (willingness to engage and outrage expressed) • To understand the risks perceived by different stakeholder groups • To build trust and a working relationship or partnership to deal with the issues • To build capacity to consider environmental values as well as property values and make informed decisions • Overcoming disbelief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different tools for different sectors of audience – online, twitter, surveys, blogs, face-to-face • Location – go to them and use known community champions and local networks to spread word; provide information in places where people will be prepared to listen (rather than focused on other activities) • Allow people to move in and out of engagement – active or on edge • Consultation with facts – ‘known knows’ • Target the process and tools to the needs of the local community, for instance shopfront, on the dune field days & at clubs, letter box drops, meetings with people in their homes, web based or other measures to engage absentee landholders • Use local knowledge to build a community of practice and to strengthen local ownership of the solution • Stage the engagement process - broad messaging and conversations in stage 1 directed to everybody, then stage 2 is targeted surveys and meetings with the most affected groups • Carefully manage public meetings - they are relatively quick to organise, but a risky form of communication; a skilled facilitator is critical • Think about creative mechanisms such as photo voice or engagement through schools, to introduce ideas to the community and provide opportunities for them to express an opinion

Other points from the discussion included:

- Often community engagement comes too late in the piece and/or lip service is paid with the actions already pre-determined – this approach sows the seeds for community cynicism and outrage.
- Use language and terminology that is clear to the community/stakeholders involved; for instance, frame hazards and risks in language that is understandable by the community; talk about uses of an area as the way into a conversation about values.

- Be clear about the long term objectives - the community needs to understand the proposed outcomes - manage expectations - discuss the end points.
- Allay community fear. It's alright to be concerned and to ask questions about change.
- Understand that different stakeholder groups will have different perceptions of risk and that their perceptions will be driven by different factors.
- Be clear about parameters - what's in & out - achievable and not. Avoid offering a process or an outcome that cannot be delivered. Be clear about how the community's input will be used.



- 'Community' per se is too amorphous - need to differentiate between communities of place, of practice and of interest; community profiling is a useful preparatory tool.
- Prioritise consultation (e.g. most affected to least and most engaged with area to least)
- Be aware that consensus isn't always achievable.
- If you're not sure what the answer is, have faith that the process of community engagement will deliver an answer.

A copy of the workshop slides are available at:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/05_workshop_slides.pdf

A copy of the fictional case study is available at:

http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sites/default/files/06_workshop_scenario_creeping_waters.pdf


6 EVALUATION

At the end of the Forum, a survey was conducted to evaluate the event. Participants were asked to provide an overall rating of the content and answer a series of qualitative questions on each element of the Forum. Thirteen of the 25 participants completed the survey. Feedback was largely positive, with the majority of participants rating the overall content as 'Very Good'.

Council case studies were highlighted as being particularly useful to provide shared learnings to other practitioners in the room. Participants noted that the workshop was truncated due to time constraints and would have provided more value if it had been a longer program. Most also found the panel discussion at the conclusion of the first part of the afternoon useful, but too short, or requiring greater clarity and focus.

In addition to general feedback, participants expressed an interest in learning more about the suite of communication tools available and how to choose the right one, as well as

The NSW Branch of
ACS
Australian Coastal Society Ltd



Tapping into local knowledge: better community engagement in coastal planning

EVALUATION FORM

NAME (OPTIONAL): _____ ORGANISATION (OPTIONAL): _____

POSITION (OPTIONAL): _____

SCCG and ACS are interested to hear your opinion on today's Workshop. Please complete the following evaluation and submit the form by the end of the day, alternatively email or fax to the SCCG on info@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au or (02) 9265 7702.

1. Please tick the appropriate box to rate the day:

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
OVERALL CONTENT					

2. What did you feel was the most valuable part / highlight of today's Workshop?

3. Please rate the presentations' overall relevance to you (all boxes should contain a number between 1 to 5 - 1 being most relevant, 5 being least relevant)

Presentation title	Rating
1. Political issues and community engagement for coastal management (Dr. Lisa Intemann)	
2. Media reporting of local issues (Cameron Marshall)	
3. Introduction to the theory of risk perception, outrage management, understanding the community and conflict resolution (Dr. Sheridan Cookes)	

Comments: _____

4. Did you find the case studies useful? (please circle Y or N - if no please detail why)

Case One: Lake Macquarie City Council	Y / N	Why:
Case Two: Gosford City Council	Y / N	Why:
Case Three: Greater Taree City Council	Y / N	Why:

measures of success in community engagement and examples where community engagement had led to a positive outcome.

6.1 Future workshops

As part of the evaluation, participants were also asked to identify topics for future joint workshops between the SCCG and the NSW Branch of the ACS. The following proposals were received:

- Future workshops should be practical/applied in nature
- Adapting formal risk management processes to coastal/flood planning
- Including community engagement in coastal hazard definition studies at the beginning of the process
- Science in the coastal zone - what it is, and how it is disseminated?
- What are appropriate design standards for specific projects (i.e. how to define the frequency/magnitude and design life of assets)?
- Cost sharing and funding of coastal adaptation.

7 SUMMARY

This Forum was presented as part of the SCCG's Capacity Building Program, in partnership with the NSW Branch of the ACS and environmental consultants Umwelt. The SCCG's Capacity Building Program aims to build the role and capacity of Member Councils and other stakeholders to sustainably manage urban coastal and estuarine environments. Capacity building is undertaken through activities that strengthen knowledge, abilities, skills and behaviour via activities such as forums, workshops and guideline documents.

Overall, the Forum was successful in promoting shared learnings on community engagement from a range of perspectives, including government, non-government and media. The subject matter, forum structure, location, diversity of presenters and the contribution of participants ensured that the Forum was informative for all involved. Council case studies were particularly valuable and the workshop provided an opportunity for participants to further scope mechanisms for community engagement. The Forum would have benefited from more time being allocated to workshop specific communication tools and strategies and lessons learned will be applied to future activities.

SCCG and the NSW Branch of the ACS thank presenters and participants for their contribution and feedback and will work together in the new year to deliver future joint-forums to enhance the capacity of councils, coastal managers and practitioners to sustainably manage our coastal and estuarine environments.



Australian Coastal Society Ltd

the Australian Coastal Society Ltd
*dedicated to healthy ecosystems,
vibrant communities,
and sustainable use of coastal resources.*

PO Box 65
Flinders Park SA5042
m: 0405 564 929
e: nsw@australiancoastalsociety.org



Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc.

councils caring for the coastal environment

Level 14, Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street

GPO Box 1591, SYDNEY NSW 2001

t: +61 2 9246 7326 | **f:** +61 2 9265 9660

e: info@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au

w: www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au