

**SYDNEY COASTAL
COUNCILS GROUP**

Sydney Coastal Councils Group Policy Recommendations on the Key Coastal Management Issues Federal Election 2013

This document has been prepared for the information and response of all political parties contesting the 2013 Federal Election



INTRODUCTION

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) is a Regional Organisation of Councils representing 15 Councils in the Sydney coastal region. The Group is concerned with the promotion of cooperation and coordination to achieve the sustainable management of the urban coastal environment. See: www.sydneycostalouncils.com.au

In preparation for the 2013 Federal Election the SCCG resolved to requests that political parties contesting the election outline their policy positions on the following six key coastal management issues:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A National Coastal Council or Commission for Australia**
- **Implementing priority recommendations from the “Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate – The Time to Act is Now” report**
- **A consistent and coordinated approach to natural hazards management and climate change adaptation in the Australian coastal zone**
- **Funding for Local Government and community coastal programs**
- **A National Coastal Information System for Australia**
- **Maintaining public ownership of and access to and along the coastal zone**
- **A National Marine Management Strategy**

Protection of the coastal environment and coastal communities requires policies and actions from all levels of Government.

With dramatic increases in population, development and recreational pressures facing the Australian coastal zone there is an imperative to increase the National Government's guidance, involvement and support on management on coastal management over the next four years. This is required to improve cross jurisdictional relations, partnerships with shared visions and priority actions for our coastline via an intergovernmental agreement and associated national coastal policy agenda.

The futility of continuing to approve development and allow redevelopment in hazard areas (without addressing the hazard) has been demonstrated through the devastating losses of infrastructure and private assets in recent floods in Queensland and Victoria. Such planning failures must be rectified. We urgently require national leadership in a collaborative process across the country to effectively deal with the many opportunities and challenges the national coastal zone brings in the coming years and decades.

The SCCG will be disseminating the information provided by each party to its Member Councils and other regional and national stakeholders prior to the election.

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Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc.
Level 14, 456 Kent Street
PO Box 1591, Sydney NSW 2001
www.sydneycostalouncils.com.au
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A National Coastal Council or Commission for Australia

Desired Outcome: A National Coastal Council or Commission for Australia.

CONTEXT

The SCCG believes the creation of a National Coastal Council or Commission comprising appropriate Federal and State Ministerial portfolios supported by senior Federal and State departmental, Local Government, community, industry and research representatives, is essential. This peak intergovernmental body to be tasked with providing assistance and advice on coastal policy and practice to the Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments.



This body should be made up of relevant portfolio responsibilities of coastal issues across government¹ and supported by a full time secretariat with direct assistance from key representatives with experience and expertise in integrated coastal zone management.

This body be responsible for:

- Identifying the priority national coastal issues, risks and opportunities that it will address.
- Developing an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Coastal Zone which amongst other things sets out the role and key focus of each tier of government in relation to coastal management.
- Preparing a National Coastal Policy and associated implementation programs and funding mechanisms based on key national coastal values, and associated guiding management principles.
- Providing an auditing and reporting function on the implementation of a National Coastal Policy (potentially supported via a National Coastal Act)
- Enabling high level cross agencies and jurisdictional dialog on key coastal issues such as planning, industry, commerce, environment and emergency management.
- Identifying and addressing emerging issues relevant to national coastal management.
- Advising on the development and direction of coastal policy and programs to ensure national consistency where this is appropriate and desirable.
- Identifying opportunities to support stakeholder and community involvement in integrated coastal zone management.

Information Request: The SCCG requests the position of your Party on:

- 1) The establishment a National Coastal Council of Commission for Australia
- 2) In the absence of a National Coastal Council or Commission how your party would achieve the key essential activities outlined above ?

¹ Environment, Planning, Infrastructure, Regional Development, Primary Industries, Tourism, and Emergency Management

Implementing Recommendations from the 'Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now' Report

Desired Outcome: Implementation of recommendations detailed in the House of Representatives committee report: '*Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now*'.

CONTEXT

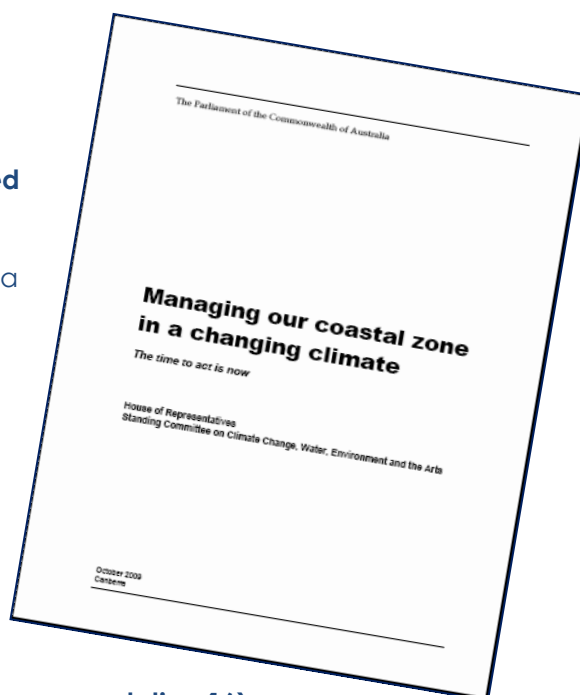
The SCCG believes the House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee should be congratulated on the inquiry report, *Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now*.

It is important the next Australian Government utilise the information contained within the report and implement the recommendations generated in it.

The SCCG support all the 47 recommendations contained within the report.

The top 10 recommendations identified by the SCCG (via professional staff and also elected Representatives of member councils) are:

1. Increased investment in climate change research. **(Recommendation 3)**
2. A clarification of liability issues. **(Recommendation 23)**
3. The development of state specific planning policies. **(Recommendation 20)**
4. Funding infrastructure maintenance. **(Recommendation 39)**
5. An assessment of vulnerable infrastructure. **(Recommendation 16)**
6. Clarification of insurance implications for public authorities and private landholders. **(Recommendation 19)**
7. A nationally consistent sea level rise benchmark. **(Recommendation 21)**
8. The collection and access to consistent and up-to-date information. **(Recommendation 11)**
9. An expansion of national priority areas identified under the Caring for our Country program. **(Recommendation 26)**
10. International coastal zone governance assessment. **(Recommendation 1).**



Information Request: The SCCG requests the position of your party on ensuring that the recommendations identified in the *Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now* Report are given the appropriate attention and acted upon.

A consistent and coordinated approach to natural hazards management and climate change adaptation in the Australian Coastal zone

Desired Outcome: An Australian Government strategy and funding commitment to the delivery of consistent and coordinated approaches to natural hazard management and climate change adaptation in the coastal zone.

CONTEXT

Natural hazards including climate change impacts will have significant impacts on the work of Local Governments and the well being of their communities. To assist Councils and the community address these impacts, the SCCG believes the following strategies and processes should be developed and implemented through an endorsed national action plan for managing hazards including climate change impacts around the Australian coastal zone:

- Processes, resources and intergovernmental activity to increase adaptive capacity of National, State and Local Governments via a national framework that assists to define responsibilities and priority actions and investment in relation to impact mitigation and adaptation.
- National based mechanisms for gathering, storing and reporting information on climate change impacts and vulnerability at a national and regional scale.
- Processes for the integration of natural hazards and climate change into the strategic planning process for coastal management.
- The implementation of a national risk management strategy and methodologies to quantify, mitigate and manage impacts including those as result of extreme events.
- Legislative and compliance support that better integrates land use planning, conservation and hazard management providing consistency, authority and long term stability in decision making.
- Policies and frameworks that prioritise actions related to mitigation and adaptation at regional and local scales.
- Strategies for engaging all relevant stakeholders.
- Coordination of State strategies with existing national and international strategies.

Each of these strategies, processes and frameworks must to be supported by a commitment from Australian and State Governments to provide the necessary supporting funding and resources for Councils to implement local actions that are consistent with National and State strategies.

In delivering the [Sydney Systems Approach to Regional Climate Adaptation Strategies in Metropolises](#) the SCCG in partnership with the CSIRO (funded by the Australian Government) identified six key areas of focus necessary for increasing adaptation capacity. The SCCG believed that these priority areas should form the basis of a revised national approach to successful national coastal adaptation.



1. **Know Your Enemy:** Enhancing understanding regarding existing and future climate hazards and social and ecological vulnerability
2. **Plan for Change:** Incorporating climate change into existing and novel Local Government planning frameworks
3. **Get Smart:** Implementing education and outreach programs to increase the knowledge of Council and the broader community with respect to climate change, vulnerability and adaptation
4. **Act, Watch and Learn:** Implementing monitoring, evaluation and reporting measures for Local Government to track outcomes with respect to policies and measures associated with climate adaptation
5. **Put the House in Order:** Developing both internal and external institutional arrangements that build adaptive capacity within and across Councils and other levels of government
6. **Money Talks:** Enhancing revenue streams to Councils to assist in financing adaptation and cost-sharing mechanisms to spread the burden among multiple tiers of government.

Information Request: The SCCG requests the position of your party on:

- 1) The proposed strategies and processes to manage natural hazards including climate change impacts in the coastal zone as outlined above and
- 2) What additional strategies and actions your party might implement to ensure adaptation and mitigation will be undertaken in an effective manner in the coastal zone.

The SCCG has been very active in the climate change adaption space since 2005 and have produced several internationally leading programs with funding assistance from National and State governments. These are listed below:

[Demonstrating Climate Change Adaptation of Interconnected Water Infrastructure Project](#)

[Prioritising Coastal Adaptation and Development Options for Local Government Project](#)

[Assessment and Decision Frameworks for Seawall Structures Project](#)

[Quantifying the Value of Sydney's Beaches](#)

[Mapping and Responding to Coastal Inundation](#)

[Audit of Sea Level Rise, Coastal Erosion and Inundation Legislation and Policy](#)

[Systems Approach to Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in Metropolises](#)

[Beach Sand Nourishment Scoping Study: Maintaining Sydney's Beach Amenity Against Climate Change Sea Level Rise](#)

[Coastal Councils Planning for Climate Change](#)

New project: [Emergency Management Planning: A Health Check for Local Government](#)

Funding for Local Government and community coastal programs

Desired Outcome: A significant increase in funding for Local Government and community coastal programs and initiatives.

CONTEXT

SCCG believe Australian Government funding commitment for coastal initiatives that provides assessment, planning, protection, restoration and capacity building activities is required. The SCCG is alarmed that the reduction in National and State support for coastal programs in recent years that has forced councils to rely on limited budgets or compete for restricted and limited grant funding to undertake coastal initiatives previously supported by National and State Governments.



The loss of many successful coastal initiatives undertaken by State and Local Governments is a significant concern. SCCG believes the end of the very successful Coasts and Clean Seas Program and the demise of Coastcare has significantly limited Councils and the community's ability to protect, enhance and participate in the management of coastal areas.



SCCG strongly urges the allocation of funding for initiatives and activities that are specifically undertaken in coastal environments. Funding that supports coastal monitoring programs, habitat protection and rehabilitation, coastal planning and capacity building would enable Councils to protect the threatened environmental, social and economic values of the coastline zone and enhance community participation.

Information request: The SCCG requests the position of your Party on it's commitment to the allocation of additional funding for initiatives and activities that must be undertaken to assist Councils and communities preserve threatened coastal assets and values.

National Coastal Information System

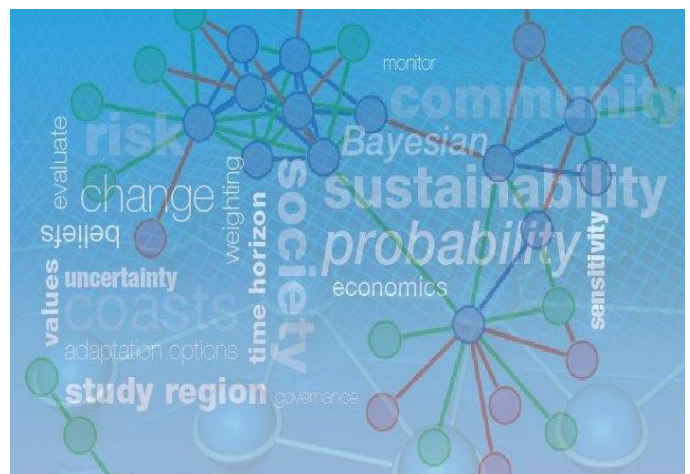
Desired Outcome: An effective National Coastal Information System.

CONTEXT

SCCG believes the Australian Government should set up a specific National Coastal information System pulling together various disparate information sources, data bases, and national coastal information providers to produce an integrated and fit for purpose mechanism of publically available information at the right scale for effective regional and local coastal zone decision making. This system would be modelled similar to the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Services Centre (www.csc.noaa.gov).

Consistent and easily accessible information for effective coastal zone management is critical. Governments, industry and the community require better access to the currently fragmented data sources across the country and better coordination of new information by continuing research and investigation.

The technical and financial capacity of coastal councils to obtain the necessary data to identify and manage existing and future coastal hazards and issues is highly variable. As a result, spatial and temporal data collection and provision of information needed for effective coastal management is not being undertaken consistently around the country. This has a significant impact on the effective integration of management strategies into planning and development assessment, leading to inconsistent decisions making across the country. This is significantly frustrating the community, business and industry leading to increasing conflict, associated litigation and poor decision making.



The National Coastal Information system would aim to ensure improve coordination and availability of information, methods and data via a centralised body that improves collaboration amongst existing authoritative data and information custodians. It would also address new opportunities for national data collection, assessment, provision, and licensing and sharing agreements to improve data coverage, useability and access. This would focus initially on key data gaps and applications while also focusing on addressing key information sharing barriers and increased public access and collaboration between all levels of government, research and the private sector.

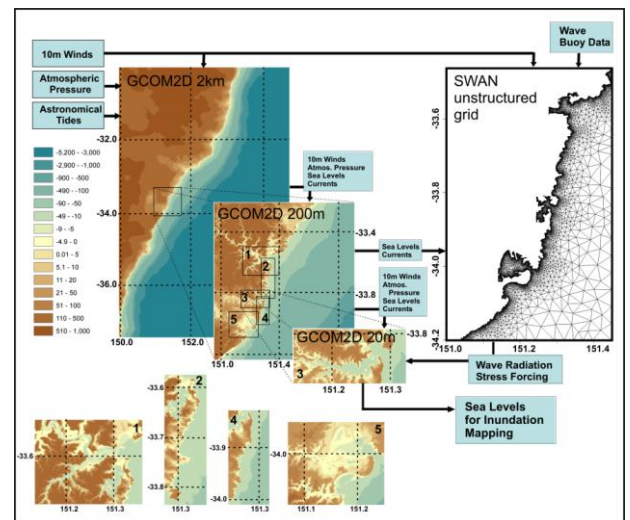
All key national and state coastal inquiries over the last three decades have highlighted the importance of a national focus, depository and coordination in regards to critical coastal data access. Results of these various inquiries have also identified that the most important types of information required for coastal management relate to: ecosystems, habitats, species, environmental impact assessment, condition of rivers, estuaries, coasts, coastal processes, coastal hazards (including those as a result of climate change impacts), socio-economic information, recreation and tourism and community priorities and values for coastal areas.

The report by the House of Representatives Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water "Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now" recommended (Recommendation 11):

That the Australian Government establish a National Coastal Zone Database to improve access to and consistency of information relevant to coastal zone adaptation.

Additional focus areas for the National Information System includes:

- Better coordination and collaboration amongst existing national information entities including Geosciences Australia (eg OzCoasts), the CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology, various National and State government agencies, CRCs, flagships, 'clusters' and other research institutions. Collaborative arrangements should initially focus on improving integration while reducing duplication. Existing national and state data platforms include but are not limited to: Ozcoasts, BlueNet, Australian Ocean Data Centre, the previous National and land and water resources audit, and other state initiatives such as Victoria's Futures Coasts and the 'NSW Coastal, Estuarine and Management Knowledge Strategy'.



- Developing national methods, standards and processes for data collection, storage, access and provision where possible and appropriate.
- Acquisition and dissemination of 'authoritative' information required to achieve the sustainable use and management of coastal areas.
- Advising on the research needs of end-users, including communities, decision makers and policy-makers responsible for coastal planning and management.
- Facilitating the use of multi-disciplinary, integrated science and the adoption of planning and management tools to achieve the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Australia's coastal zone.
- Identifying and addressing key nation and regional information gaps including but not limited to:
 - Responses and understanding of key coastal processes to changing climate conditions and impacts such as sea level rise
 - Riverine, estuarine and open coastal processes
 - Coastal resource use and associated condition assessment
 - Socio-economic information and considerations
 - Community priorities and values

OzCoasts (www.ozcoasts.gov.au) is considered a potential foundation for such a national information system if State and local government authorities and other key research institutions and data custodians can effectively collaborate and integrate their information and research effort. There are also numerous models internationally that could be reviewed to assist define the most appropriate, cost effective, efficient and sustaining / long term model. One key example is the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Services Centre (www.csc.noaa.gov) which provides the technology, information, and management strategies used by local, state, and national organisations to address complex coastal issues.

Information request: The SCCG request the position of your Party on the establishment of an effective, integrated National Coastal Information System that provides publically accessible information at the right scale for regional and local decision making via a consistent national application.

Maintaining public ownership of and public access to and along the coastal zone.

Desired Outcome: Policies and programs that ensure the maintenance of public ownership of and public access in the coastal zone.

CONTEXT

Increasing population, development and recreational demand along the Australian coastline combined with the impacts of natural hazards and those associated climate change such as sea level rise is placing increased pressures on publicly owned land in coastal areas. The SCCG supports the retention of public land in the coastal zone and urges all political parties to support actions that protect coastal public lands in perpetuity and ensure the provision of adequate funds for their management. The SCCG is seeking a commitment from the next Australian Government to consider:

a) Expanding the 'interest' considerations consideration within the National Lands Acquisition Act, 1989 to purchase private lands in coastal areas that are considered nationally iconic, threatened, unique, and / or socially and culturally significant,

b) Utilising the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act to ensure public access to and use of foreshore areas is maintained and managed so that fragile ecosystems and habitats are preserved.



Public access to coastal and foreshore areas is necessary for a wide range of recreational, tourism and commercial uses. The SCCG promotes appropriate public access in the coastal zone. To achieve this objective councils nationally require assistance through the development of policy and guidelines that balance a number of issues including appropriate types of access, public risk and the protection of sensitive coastal environments. The SCCG opposes all coastal developments that denies or restricts public access to coastal beaches, foreshores and waters.

Information request: The SCCG requests the position of your Party on:

- 1) Protecting coastal public lands in perpetuity and ensure the provision of adequate funds for their management
- 2) Utilising the National Lands Acquisition Act, 1989 by expanding the 'interest' considerations within the Act to purchase private lands in coastal areas that are considered nationally iconic, threatened, unique, and or socially and culturally significant,
- 3) Utilising the EPBC Act to ensure public access and use of foreshore areas is maintained and managed so that fragile ecosystems and habitats are preserved.
- 4) Oppose coastal developments that deny or restrict responsible public access to coastal beaches, foreshores and waters
- 5) Undertaken an audit of national coastal land areas with a view of identifying new opportunities to allow public foreshore access

A National Marine Management Strategy

Desired Outcome: Development and implementation of an intergovernmental National Marine Management Strategy.

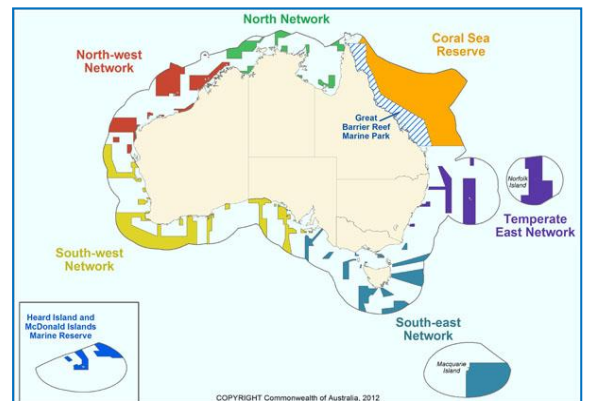
The Australian marine environment is recognised for its outstanding natural beauty, unique and diverse marine biota and valuable resources. The national marine estate is the third largest of any nation in the world. Due to its significant natural, cultural, social and economic values to residents and visitors the National and State marine environment must be managed in a coordinated and sustainable manner to ensure the ongoing conservation of marine biodiversity.

In 2012, the Australian Government established 40 new Commonwealth marine reserves around Australia. The new Commonwealth marine reserves adding more than 2.3 million square kilometres to Australia's marine reserve estate, resulting in a total area of 3.1 million square kilometres of ocean being managed primarily for biodiversity conservation. (From <http://www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/>)

The SCCG believes that there is now a great opportunity to develop an intergovernmental National Marine Strategy. This strategy would aim to build on fundamentals of the 1998 Australia's Oceans Policy developing a national framework working collaboratively with all States, territory and Local Governments to coordinate management and conservations efforts for all of Australia's marine assets and values.

The National Marine Management Strategy would seek to:

- Implement national consistent arrangements for the planning and management of the national marine estate (including State waters)
- Identify and protect natural and ecosystem values
- Ensure sustainable recreational use, tourism and visitor management
- Use and extraction of marine resources consistent with the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development
- Understand and mitigate the impact of terrestrial land uses and climate change on the marine environment; and
- Establish and enhance nationally important marine research and monitoring to ensure comprehensive national coverage addressing marine:
 - Biological diversity
 - Processes and understandings
 - Uses and impacts
 - Tourism
 - International policies, agreement, treaties and obligations
 - Community participation and education and
 - Protecting key national interests including defense, surveillance and enforcement



Information request: The SCCG requests the position of your Party on:

- 1) The development and implementation of a National Marine Management Strategy; or
- 2) In the absence of such a strategy how you would ensure that the national marine environment is managed in a coordinated and sustainable manner.



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.com.au

