

COASTAL CURRENTS



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From the Chair

The sun is shining, wildflowers are in bloom and people are dusting off their surfboards, kayaks, swimsuits and towels – it must be spring in Sydney!

Meanwhile, the Sydney Coastal Councils Group and our eleven Member Councils are hard at work as always, protecting, managing and being strong advocates for our coastal environments.

We have been watching closely for the NSW Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy and Draft Coastal Management Zone Maps, which were released by the Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, on 11 November. We thank the Minister for responding to the SCCG's request to incorporate mapping and protection for coastal wetlands and littoral rainforest in the Sydney region. However, it is extremely disappointing that the draft coastal area maps contain no information on coastal hazards, despite the hundreds of existing studies on the risks of coastal erosion and inundation already conducted by state and local government.

We have also been awaiting the next stages of consultation on the NSW Biodiversity Reforms. At the time of writing, it seems likely that the *Biodiversity Conservation* and *Local Land Services Amendment Bills* will be passed by Parliament on 17 November, with potentially devastating effects on native vegetation, wildlife and ecological processes. The SCCG and Member Councils are convinced that the proposed changes are a backwards step in biodiversity conservation, that will lead to a significant increase in vegetation clearing and put many species on a faster trajectory to extinction. We will continue to voice our concerns about the resulting impacts of these reforms on biodiversity in NSW.

In more positive news, a state-wide series of workshops to fine tune and introduce to regional areas of NSW the SCCG Emergency Management Health Check have been well attended, and the online Health Check tool is on track for release by the end of 2016.

The Salty Communities Grant Program is nearing completion, and a recent series of Urban Ecology Seminars and site visits have showcased the achievements of the grant recipients and facilitated peer-to-peer learning. The 'community of practice' established by the Salty Communities grants will continue on past the life of the funding and be a terrific legacy for the program.

In October we held our AGM, and our [Annual Report 2015-16](#) is now available from our website. I was honoured to be elected as Chair once again, and I am very pleased to welcome new members to the Executive Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all our delegates, past and present, for their support, and I look forward to working with all our Member Councils over the next twelve months.

Councillor Lynne Saville
SCCG CHAIRPERSON

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The SCCG was established in 1989 to promote coordination between Member Councils on environmental issues relating to sustainable management of the urban coastal environment.

The SCCG currently consists of eleven Member Councils adjacent to Sydney marine and estuarine environments and associated waterways in Sydney: Bayside, Inner West, Mosman, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Randwick, Sutherland, Sydney, Waverley, Willoughby and Woollahra.



Bayside Council

**NORTHERN BEACHES
COUNCIL**



**Mosman
COUNCIL**



INNER WEST COUNCIL

www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au

Project Updates



Sydney's Salty Communities – Turning the Tide on Blue+Green Carbon

SCCG recently held several free seminars on key issues in urban ecology to strengthen the community of practice around urban biodiversity management.

Executive seminar: Planning for adaptation

Held at Waterfront, Circular Quay on 18 October, this seminar was aimed at local government directors. We were pleased to have 28 attendees. Speakers A/Prof Rod Simpson, Greater Sydney Commission, Dr Mark Stafford Smith, CSIRO and Prof Darryl Low Choy, Griffith University, framed the seminar in a global context and explored regional challenges and opportunities.

Urban Ecology Series

Held at the Coal Loader on 9-10 November, we thank North Sydney Council for hosting us. This series offered three sessions engaging with the latest thinking and research on urban ecology. The CSIRO's Dr Michael Dunlop and Paul Ryan from the Australian Resilience Centre presented to 29 attendees on **Biodiversity & climate change in an urban landscape**. This introduced [The Climate Ready Tool](#), developed with SCCG as part of the Salty Program. The range of councils represented meant the tool was promoted to areas beyond its original scope.

In **Communicating about weeds in an urban landscape** Dr Eleanor Glenn (Common Cause) explored the implications of research into values and psychological priming and framing, while IAP²'s Helen Christensen examined public engagement in detail. The 31 attendees responded positively to this challenging seminar.

A/Prof Sarah Bekessy (RMIT) engaged the 43 in attendance on **Connectivity & biodiversity in an urban landscape**, emphasising the value of every-day-nature in the future of cities. Katie Oxenham from SSROC provided a review of the programs that she has been involved with around connectivity, including the Salty-funded Connected Corridors mapping project. Attendees enjoyed this positive and hopeful final session.



Emergency Management: are you ready?

How ready is your council for a flood, fire, storm or other emergency?

As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, more than ever it is critical that local councils understand their role and capabilities to manage these events and their impacts on the community.

The SCCG received funding from the joint NSW / Commonwealth Natural Disaster Resilience Program to develop an easy-to-use, online Emergency Management 'Health Check' tool.

The Health Check is a series of questions to enable councils to assess their level of risk, preparedness, investment and resources for Emergency Management. An analysis of this information is delivered via a report to the council, from which action and mitigation plans can be prepared and, where necessary, a business case for funding developed.

Now in Stage 2 of the project, SCCG has contracted consulting firm Janellis to facilitate a series of stakeholder workshops around NSW. These workshops, held from September to November in Newcastle, Dubbo, Ballina, Ulladulla, Sydney city and Western Sydney, have provided training and feedback that will be used to fine tune the tool and ensure it is user-friendly and tailored to councils' needs.

The Emergency Management Health Check tool together with an Emergency Readiness Resource Pack will be made available to all councils via a secure, web-based platform in late 2016. For more information contact Belinda Atkins on 02 9246 7326.



Advocacy Activity

NSW Government overlooks 6,500 houses at risk

On 11 November the Hon. Minister Rob Stokes MP [released](#) the Draft NSW Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) and accompanying Coastal Zone maps for [public comment](#). The SCCG responded to the Minister's announcement via press release. The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) covered the story and quoted SCCG.

The new Coastal Management SEPP supports the implementation of the new [Coastal Management Act 2016](#) and integrates the existing SEPP 14 (Coastal Wetlands), SEPP 26 (Littoral Rainforests) and SEPP 71 (Coastal Protection).

In line with SCCG recommendations, for the first time the draft SEPP and maps incorporate protection for coastal wetlands and littoral rainforest in Sydney as well as regional NSW. However, it is disappointing that the draft maps contain no information on coastal hazards. State and local governments have prepared over 200 coastal hazard studies for NSW, including a study commissioned by the SCCG that found more than 6,500 properties in the Greater Sydney region alone are currently at risk from coastal storm surge inundation during a 100-year storm event.

Thousands of houses, critical infrastructure and hundreds of hectares of public space are at risk from storm surge inundation and coastal erosion. The SCCG has strongly recommended to the NSW Government that the known and mapped risks should be made available to the community at this important stage in the Coastal Reforms consultation process. So far, this recommendation has not been followed. The SCCG will reconvene its Coastal Reforms Advisory Committee to assist in the preparation of the SCCG submission to this and subsequent stages in the Coastal Reforms process.

The Department of Planning and Environment will host seven community information sessions on the draft SEPP across NSW, including two in Sydney on 5 December: 10.30am-12pm (Cronulla) and 5.30-7pm (Manly). Go to <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/CoastalReform> for all dates and documentation.

7,000 submissions received to NSW Biodiversity 'Reforms'

A total of 7,166 submissions were received to the proposed package of land management and biodiversity conservation reforms released by the NSW Government on 3 May 2016, including a [submission from the SCCG](#) and 6,632 from concerned individuals.

A Summary of Submissions Report was released on 20 September and all non-confidential submissions are also available to read on the [Biodiversity Reforms website](#).

The reforms constitute a severe weakening of environmental protections in this state. The SCCG have expressed serious reservations about the proposals in our submission and subsequent letters to NSW Government representatives. The SCCG also asked members of the Legislative Council to call for an Upper House Inquiry to the proposed reforms.

At the time of writing, it seems likely that the *Biodiversity Conservation and Local Land Services Amendment Bills* will be passed by Parliament on 17 November. The government plans to commence the new laws in two stages in 2017, with full legislative changes from 1 July 2017.

Further consultation opportunities on detailed components of the package will include:

- exhibiting the supporting regulations
- consulting on the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map
- exhibiting a draft SEPP (Urban Tree Removal) – expected by the end of 2016
- exhibiting draft instruments such as the Biodiversity Assessment Method and the Land Management Codes - expected from early 2017.

For more information, go to www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au.

Greater Sydney Commission District Plans: community drop-in sessions

The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) is seeking feedback on the draft District Plans for the six new 'districts' declared across Greater Sydney.

[District Plans](#) will take the place of the former subregional plans, and will sit between the NSW Government's metropolitan strategy, '[A Plan for Growing Sydney](#)', and [Local Environment Plans](#).

The GSC Environment Commissioner, Roderick Simpson, addressed the SCCG's Annual General Meeting in October to discuss the Commission and its powers, the role of the Environment Panel and the intent of the District Plans. The SCCG is a member of the Environment Panel and has contributed to the Environment Panel's Advisory Paper on 14 key environmental issues for Sydney, to be released on 21 November.

Draft District Plans will be on public exhibition from the end of 2016 to the end of March 2017. Formal submissions will be invited during the period of exhibition, and there will also be opportunities to discuss and comment informally on the plans.

The GSC is hosting a series of community drop in sessions in November and December, held in each of the six districts of Greater Sydney. Go to www.greater.sydney/get-involved for dates and more information, or participate in the online discussion at www.greater.sydney/discuss.

Coastal News

Prioritising coastal adaptation options at the local level: the SCCG experience

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group was approached by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) to become a member of the Tool Development Partnership, to play a role in supporting and providing input, guidance and advice on the development of the CoastAdapt Tool and testing of the final product.

NCCARF also contracted the SCCG to prepare a [case study](#) on our Australian Government-funded project [Prioritising Coastal Adaptation Development Options for Local Government](#). This project demonstrates how different economic, social, environmental and governance values can be integrated with information on hazards, assets, and the performance of different adaptation options (e.g. shoreline stabilisation, structure elevation, property acquisition, increased setbacks etc.) to identify preferable adaptation pathways for councils.

This project produced some interesting key findings. For example, from the perspective of local government staff, adaptation options that perform well against various financial criteria also perform well from an environmental perspective, suggesting common assumptions regarding trade-offs between the economy and the environment may not always hold true.

SCCG now hiring!

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group is seeking a dedicated and enthusiastic **Coastal Projects Officer**, responsible for coordinating projects, building capacity through engagement programs, facilitating information exchange and advocating on behalf of member councils. Download the [Information Package](#) and email your application to info@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au by 5pm Monday 21 November.

Annual Report 2015-2016 now available

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group [Annual Report 2015-2016](#) is now available from our website. Our Annual Report provides members and stakeholders with an overview of our activities against our four key goals of collaboration, capacity building, advocacy and research. This year we've also featured the recipients of the Sydney's Salty Communities Grants Program and the amazing work they've done to restore natural areas and maintain biodiversity and carbon storage in 'salt-influenced' ecosystems around Sydney.

Coming soon... Summerama!

Our annual program of fun, family-friendly coastal activities will be held again in January 2017. A full program of activities will be available soon on the [Summerama website](#) – check back in December to find out what's on near you!

Just for fun: meet Piper the Sandpiper, from Pixar

Disney [Pixar's latest short film](#) about a young sandpiper overcoming a paralysing fear of the ocean has been voted "the cutest Pixar animation ever" by the [Sydney Morning Herald](#). If you haven't seen it yet, you are in for a treat!



CoastAdapt Tool: Try it now!

Coastal decision makers can now test a new tool that provides them with pretty much everything they need to adapt their community or business to coastal climate impacts.

[CoastAdapt](#) is an online decision support and information delivery system designed to meet the needs of coastal decision makers in government, business, community groups and NGOs.

[CoastAdapt](#) brings together a diverse range of reliable information, maps, guidance, and international and Australian examples of coastal adaptation.

A decision support system, C-CADS, takes users through steps to determine what response is necessary, timing of actions, costs and how to monitor and evaluate the results.

[CoastAdapt](#) also provides [CoastExchange](#), an online forum where the community of adaptors can share problems, news and ideas, and pose questions to a panel of experts.

The beta version was launched in Melbourne on 23 August by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) at a meeting with local, state and national leaders in coastal management. It is open for review and feedback until November 2016 and the final version will be launched in 2017.

CoastAdapt was funded by the Australian Department of the Environment and Energy.



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