

# COASTAL CURRENTS



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## From the Chair

Winter is finally here, and as storms batter our coast the turbulent times for local councils also continue. Even where amalgamations have now been settled, the challenges will continue as the newly formed councils align their systems and operations.

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group has gone from fifteen Member Councils at the beginning of 2016, to twelve at the time of writing. However our area of concern is still extensive, covering around 800km<sup>2</sup> and nearly 1.5 million Sydneysiders. We warmly welcome the new Inner West and Northern Beaches Councils to the SCCG family.

NSW is also currently experiencing major legislative restructure. The new *Coastal Management Act 2016* has been passed by Parliament. The NSW Government intends to replace the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* and the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001* with a *Biodiversity Conservation Bill* and *Local Land Services Amendment Bill* which are substantially weaker in their protections for native vegetation and biodiversity. The SCCG prepared substantial submissions to both sets of reforms including detailed commissioned legal commentary and recommendations.

At the national level, a nail-biting election has finally been resolved. In the lead up to election day, the SCCG sought information from the major parties contesting this election on their coastal management policies, and their responses are collated in a [report](#) available on our website. We will continue to work with all parties in the federal parliament to improve coastal management at the national scale.

Changes are also happening in the natural environment across Australia and around the globe. This autumn was Australia's warmest. The Great Barrier Reef has experienced its worst bleaching on record and the bleaching has even affected Sydney's corals. Sydney's intense storms in June caused major coastal erosion and left homes and infrastructure badly damaged, leading us to ask again, are we managing natural coastal hazards appropriately under a changing climate?

At times like these, the work of the Sydney Coastal Councils Group and our Member Councils become even more important. The threats to our natural coastal areas, amongst the most beautiful in the world, only keep increasing. It is in everybody's best interest to keep them safe, biodiverse and beautiful.

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 twelve Member Councils adjacent to Sydney marine and estuarine environments and associated waterways in Sydney: Botany, Inner West, Mosman, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Randwick, Rockdale, Sutherland, Sydney, Waverley, Willoughby and Woollahra.

 **INNER WEST COUNCIL**



# Project Updates



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## Sydney Regional Flying-Fox Forum

In recent years, flying-foxes have been establishing new roost sites and gathering in increased numbers in urban and peri-urban areas. There is growing evidence that these behavioural changes are consistent with behavioural responses to acute food shortages associated with drought and habitat destruction. As a result, SCCG Member Councils, along with many councils across NSW and other states are grappling with significant human/flying-fox conflict.

In response to this situation, SCCG hosted a Sydney Regional Flying-Fox Forum in June with assistance from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage. The event was open to all councils and land managers across Sydney and provided updates on scientific research and monitoring, and on NSW Government policy, [management planning](#) and [community engagement tools](#) and a new [funding program](#). Council case studies were presented and gaps in current knowledge and other resource needs were discussed.

Presentations from the forum will soon be made available on the [SCCG website](#). We look forward to continuing to work with OEH and our Member Councils on an appropriate Sydney regional approach to achieve the challenging twin aims of flying-fox conservation and conflict reduction.

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



The Salty Program is entering its final stages with the completion of our main round projects in June. Final reports on these are currently being completed.

Our [supplementary projects](#) include [Connected Corridors](#) in partnership with Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils and Greater Sydney Local Land Services; and [Hollows as Homes](#) working with Sydney University, the Australian Museum and Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. These projects will be complete in December 2016.

We are also undertaking four special projects to fill gaps identified during the program. These will focus on capacity building, planning for climate change impacts on saltmarsh and mangroves, backyard habitat programs and blue-green carbon. We look forward to sharing the findings and lessons of the program in various capacity building and outreach activities including workshops, meetings, newsletters and field trips. For more information visit the [website](#).

## Collaboration for better beaches and waterways: a new MOU with Sydney Water

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group and Sydney Water have signed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining how the two organisations will work together to achieve healthier waterways and improved urban water management.

This new agreement marks the next chapter for the two organisations that have already achieved significant benefits for the liveability of Sydney's coast over the past 25 years.

Activities under the MOU will focus on integrated water management, which looks to balance water, sewerage and stormwater solutions to optimise environmental, social and economic outcomes. For example, under the MoU, SCCG and Sydney Water have already delivered a regional Healthy Waterways workshop and facilitated water asset data exchange between Sydney Water and SCCG Member Councils.



# Advocacy Activity

## NSW biodiversity legislation under threat

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group is seriously concerned by the proposed package of biodiversity legislation reforms for New South Wales. The existing legislation has strong principles and procedures to protect biodiversity which have been developed over time and in consultation with multiple sectors of the community. The proposed reforms constitute a severe weakening of environmental protections in this state.

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group prepared a [submission](#) to the proposed reforms with thirty-three recommendations, including:

- The Native Vegetation Act 2003 be retained.
- In any situation where biodiversity offsets are applied, the hierarchy of avoid, minimise, offset must be strictly applied; as must the concept of like-for-like. The proposed variation rules are not acceptable.
- All developments and changes in land use involving vegetation clearing be held to the same minimum standard i.e. to improve or maintain biodiversity values and environmental condition.

## Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion Assessment

The SCCG prepared a [submission](#) to the [Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Park Assessment](#) process with numerous recommendations for improvement to the NSW Government's proposed management initiatives. A key SCCG recommendation was strong support for a multi-use marine park for the Hawkesbury Shelf Bioregion, support that has also been expressed via a direct letter to the NSW Premier.

Approximately 1% of the Hawkesbury Shelf Bioregion is currently protected within ten small Aquatic Reserves and the marine extension of the Bouddi National Park. These aquatic reserves and the fourteen Intertidal Protected Areas are highly valued by SCCG Member Councils and their communities, but they are small, and on their own do not achieve a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) network of protected areas.

The primary purpose of a marine park, as for a terrestrial national park, is to conserve biodiversity. Marine parks also provide significant economic benefits to local communities through tourism and associated businesses. A CAR network of sanctuary zones within a multi-use marine park, while managing other threats such as pollution, will protect marine life and help build the resilience of the marine environment to the impacts of a changing climate.

## Plastic: not so fantastic

Plastics are versatile, inexpensive, durable and lightweight, and they have become ubiquitous in manufacturing and packaging. They are also now one of the world's most pervasive problems.

Typically 50 – 80% of the waste that accumulates on beaches, the ocean surface and the seabed is plastic. The UN Environment Programme listed plastic debris in oceans as one of three global emerging issues. Plastic debris threatens over 250 species of marine fauna by entanglement and ingestion.

SCCG Member Councils are implementing multiple initiatives to reduce the volume of plastic debris entering our estuaries and ocean. At the request of our Member Councils, the SCCG wrote to the NSW Government in May to express support for the promised NSW [container deposit scheme](#) and to call for a ban on plastic microbeads and single-use plastic bags across Australia, initiatives we also recommended to the Australian Government in our [2016 Election Policy Recommendations Document](#).

Want to learn more? Watch a [Catalyst feature on microplastics](#) or read about how [synthetic clothing is a major source of plastic fibres](#) in the marine environment.

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## Coastal Reforms Update

The [Coastal Management Bill 2016](#) was passed by both Houses of Parliament on 31 May. A full draft Coastal Management SEPP and corresponding maps will be released for public comment in the second half of 2016.

The new Act will not come into effect until the public consultation on the full draft of the SEPP and the maps are complete. The *Coastal Protection Act 1979* and the existing SEPPs (14, 26 and 71) will remain in place during the SEPP consultation period. For more information click [here](#).

The SCCG made a substantial [submission](#) to the consultation process on the draft bill. In addition we have since written to the NSW Government expressing particular concern that Coastal Vulnerability Area maps will be apparently be released showing only modelled coastal erosion hazards for open coast sandy embayments, with no coastal hazards including inundation defined or mapped for any of the State's estuaries and coastal lakes, including Pittwater, Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay and Port Hacking.

SCCCG recommends a more responsible approach to the coastal hazard mapping for the draft SEPP, incorporating:

- All known coastal hazard data held by state and local governments
- That existing State wide inundation mapping, dealing with coastal and tidal inundation hazards for all NSW estuaries be incorporated from the outset of the SEPP implementation.

## Coastal News

### Diving over the language barrier to aquatic knowledge

In May 2016 the Multicultural Aquatic Champion Peer Education Program delivered by the Greater Sydney Local Land Services (GS LLS) and funded by the NSW Environmental Trust offered an Aquatic Champions training day to the Mandarin speaking community. Forty Mandarin-speaking participants who had expressed an interest in becoming stewards for the aquatic environment within their community took part.

The training day provided knowledge, skills and key messages about threats to the aquatic environment and how individuals can protect our waterways when fishing and boating, and also when on land (e.g. preventing litter entering waterways).

This motivated group have already begun to disseminate the key messages to the Mandarin-speaking community at churches and temples, social groups, English classes, festivals, and by talking to family and friends. They have also undertaken a Clean Up Event on the Georges River. Their goal is to continue to share these key messages with their community and be involved in future Clean Up Events.

To find out more, go to the [GSLLS website](#) or contact Linda Dedovic, Greater Sydney Local Land Services on 02 4724 2137.



GSLLS CHINESE-SPEAKING AQUATIC CHAMPIONS APRIL CLEAN UP EVENT. PHOTO © GSLLS