



# Sydney Coastal Councils Group

Resilient coasts. Engaged communities. Local leadership. Regional impact.



## 2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT



Published 2017

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# From The Chair

2016-17 was another challenging year full of uncertainty regarding NSW council amalgamations. However, SCCG continued to provide benefits and services to our eleven Member Councils.

SCCG's activities have covered a range of coastal management issues including coastal hazards, climate change adaptation, healthy waterways, and biodiversity conservation.

During the year, SCCG received funding through grants and collaborative partnerships to develop, advance and promote tools and resources to achieve sustainable coastal management. Our largest grant-based project, *Sydney's Salty Communities* wrapped up this year, with SCCG investing the remainder of the federal grant funds in assisting our Member Councils in finalising the supplementary round projects, and undertaking a series of special projects and capacity building events that has restored and enhanced biodiversity across the region.

I would like to thank the SCCG Secretariat staff for their commitment and hard work in implementing projects and providing services that address members interests, needs and emerging trends.

I would also like to sincerely thank all SCCG Member Councils and delegates for their valued contributions throughout the year. Our achievements can be attributed to the combined efforts and level of engagement of our Member Council delegates, both elected representatives and professional staff, which ensure that SCCG continues to drive collaborative regional outcomes.

During 2016-17, the SCCG has lead, advocated, coordinated and collaborated on efforts to sustainably manage our coast, and is well positioned to continue to provide services with its Member Councils to conserve and improve Sydney's coasts and waterways.



Cr Lynne Saville  
**Chairperson**



# From the Executive Officer

During 2016-17, SCCG responded proactively to challenges and opportunities, and achieved positive outcomes in sustainable coastal management for our Members through the implementation of our Strategic Plan.

SCCG provided a strong voice representing member issues and concerns on government legislation, regulation and policy, developing seven comprehensive submissions on key reforms; including the Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms and the Coastal Reforms, with SCCG instrumental in informing the decision by the state government to exhibit the Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy. During the year, SCCG also utilised its regional voice by giving evidence at the public hearing of the Senate Inquiry into Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures.

Through membership on and/or facilitation of numerous internal and external committees, peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities were provided to our Member Councils and staff. Whilst collaborative research and project partnerships, with organisations, councils, government departments, academic institutions and experts has enabled effective collaboration, built capacity, and influenced the focus and direction of coastal management in Sydney.

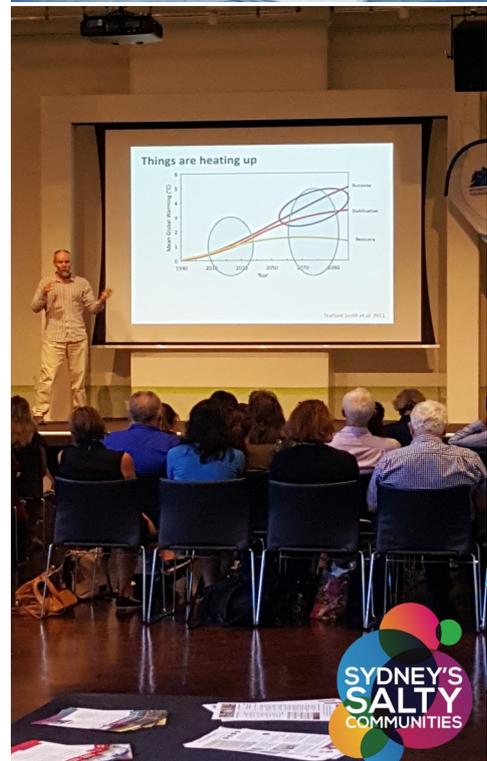
Two significant grant-based projects, *'Sydney's Salty Communities'* and *'Implementing and Embedding an Emergency Management Health Check for Local Government'* were successfully brought to fruition with outcomes and outputs exceeding expectations.

SCCG continued to build on its relationship with Sydney Water through the Memorandum of Understanding and the development of an Action Plan: *'Systems Management for Healthy Waterways'*, to achieve healthier waterways and integrated urban water management.

This Annual Report provides an overview of key activities, highlights and outcomes achieved during 2016-17.



**Geoff Withycombe**  
**Executive Officer**



# About Us



Established in 1989, the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) is a regional organisation of councils (ROC), comprising eleven Member Councils, that advances sustainable management of Sydney's urban coastal environment.

SCCG is made up of the Secretariat and three core Committees, namely the Executive Committee, Full Group Committee (Councillors and staff), and Technical Committee (technical staff). The functions, operations, activities and committees of the SCCG are facilitated by the Secretariat, made up of an Executive Officer, Manager Projects and Programs, Coastal Projects Officer, Support Officer and specific grant-based Project Officers.

The Full Group Committee provides a forum for Councillors and Senior staff to share information and direct core activities. The Technical Committee enables council staff to exchange information, network and learn from their peers, collaborate on current and emerging needs and develop regional projects. The Executive Committee undertake decision-making on specific strategic and governance matters. The Executive Committee members nominated at the 2016 AGM for 2016-17 representation are provided below.



**Chairperson**  
Cr Lynne Saville  
Willoughby  
Council



**Vice Chair  
Estuarine**  
Cr Greg  
Levenston  
Woollahra  
Council



**Vice Chair  
Ocean**  
Cr Leon  
Goltsman  
Waverley  
Council



**Member**  
Cr Jack Boyd  
Sutherland  
Council



**Member**  
Cr Jess Miller  
City of Sydney



**Member**  
Mr Frank  
Breen  
Inner West  
Council



**Member**  
Mr David  
Dekel  
Bayside  
Council



**Member**  
Ms Kylie  
Ferguson  
Northern  
Beaches Council

## SCCG Vision

Resilient coasts. Engaged communities. Local leadership. Regional impact.

## Mission

To lead sustainable management of the coast through collaboration, research, capacity building and advocacy.

## Goals

We work towards our vision and mission through the implementation of activities under four key goals: Collaboration, Capacity Building, Advocacy and Research. For each of these goals, this report highlights our performance and achievements for 2016-2017.

# Sydney Coastal Councils Group in a Snapshot



Sydney's coastal environment faces a range of pressures which are expected to intensify over the coming years.

A growing population brings with it increased development, demands on natural resources and pollution.



Climate change is impacting on coastal ecosystems with

- \* rising sea levels,
- \* extreme weather events and
- \* warming temperatures already evident.



The SCCG assists its Member Councils to prepare for these changes and to sustainably manage our dynamic coastal environment into the future.

## OUR WORK IN 2016-2017



Coordination of: **15** SCCG & guest presentations **5** field trips & study tours



Facilitation of: **14** internal committees **60** meetings & workshops

Representation on: **18** external committees & working groups



Delivery of: **4** quarterly newsletters **12** capacity building workshops, forums & events



Advocacy via: **7** comprehensive submissions **13** letters to Government

## OUR REGION

### Landscape



An area consisting of: drowned river valley, beaches, headlands, bays, lagoons and rivers.

800 km<sup>2</sup> total area  
600 km of coastline

### Population



Sydney Coastal Councils Group represents:

*11 Member Councils*

*1.5 million Sydneysiders*

### Economy



Gross Regional Product (GRP) of the SCCG region:

*\$211,965 M GRP*

*33.96 % of the NSW GRP*



# Our Performance in 2016-2017

## Financial Performance

The financial position of the SCCG in 2016-17:

- Total Income: \$547,800
- Total Assets: \$819,915
- Total Expenditure: \$1,115,910
- Total Liabilities: \$631,719
- Total Equity: \$188,196

In 2016-2017 SCCG:

- sought funding via 5 applications
- secured \$80,000 in new grants
- utilised \$730,00 in grant funds
- completed grant projects worth \$2.4M

In addition to utilising \$376,960 in membership contributions for operational and internal expenditure, the following grant funded projects commenced, were ongoing or were completed during 2016-17.

- Salty Communities Program – Commonwealth Government grant funding
- Emergency Management Program – State Emergency Management Project Program grant funding (\$140K total project funding, received remaining \$70K in 2016/17).
- NCCARF Contract CoastAdapt Tool Implementation Partner and Coastal Tool Case Study, Griffith University – (\$16K).
- Prioritising Adaptation of Coastal Recreational Infrastructure for Climate Change - LGNSW grant program (\$80K total project funding—received \$64K in 16/17).

## Annual Members Survey

The Annual Members Survey provides an opportunity for the Full Group and Technical Committee representatives to evaluate performance, identify the continuing and future needs of Member Councils, and inform the SCCG's future activities. The Survey findings provide direction and build the capacity of the SCCG to continuously improve services to Member Councils by focusing on priority issues of concern, topics of interest and actions identified.

### Snapshot of 2016-17 Annual Survey Results:

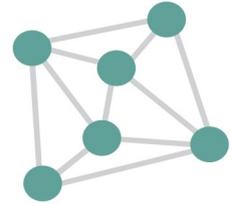
- 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SCCG promotes cooperation, collaboration and coordination among Member councils and facilitates information exchange.
- 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SCCG provided opportunities for peer to peer knowledge sharing.
- 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the SCCG performed well in advocating on Member Council interests, with 94% stating SCCG submissions were comprehensive and 100% stating submissions were of a high standard.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SCCG membership provides networking and relationship building benefits.
- 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SCCG performs well in identifying and researching current and emerging regional coastal issues.
- 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the performance of the SCCG.

# Achievements and Highlights

- Completed the grant-funded project *Implementing and Embedding an Emergency Management Health Check for Local Government*, including the development of an online Health Check Tool and Resource Toolkit hosted at [www.emhealthcheck.com.au](http://www.emhealthcheck.com.au)
- Successfully completed the *Sydney's Salty Communities* three year grant program.
- Commenced a new grant program 'Prioritising and Adapting Coastal Recreational Infrastructure for Climate Change'.
- Actively engaged with local councils, stakeholders and the NSW Government on the Coastal Management and the Biodiversity Reforms.
- Represented and advocated for Member Councils' interests through the preparation of 7 major submissions to Government policy, legislation, reviews and announcements.
- Memorandum of Understanding between Sydney Water and SCCG to enhance collaboration and communications between the organisations and the SCCG Member Councils, and to progress integrated water management across the Sydney region.
- Developed an Action Plan—Systems Management for Healthy Waterways in consultation with Member Councils and Sydney Water.
- Delivered another successful Summerama coastal education program which saw over 2,200 participants attend 84 events in January 2017 across 8 SCCG Member Councils.
- Commenced a partnership with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to develop a regional approach to Flying-fox management.
- Represented our Member Councils at conferences, events, forums and committee meetings, and shared our knowledge and expertise through presentations to other organisations and stakeholders via forums and conferences.
- Tool Implementation Partner for the CoastAdapt Tool developed by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (Griffith University).



# GOAL 1: Collaboration



Facilitate cooperation between, and coordination of, actions by Member Councils and coastal stakeholders.

## Strategies

- 1.1 Ensure our governance structure continues to facilitate effective participation of Member Councils
- 1.2 Facilitate collaboration within and between Member Councils
- 1.3 Facilitate collaboration, dialogue and partnerships with coastal stakeholders, including government agencies
- 1.4 Facilitate information exchange and sharing with Member Councils, coastal stakeholders and the broader community
- 1.5 Promote community engagement in our activities

## Summary

SCCG has been successful in bringing together council elected members, executives, practitioners with technical experts, government stakeholders and academic institutions, through workshops and forums, to facilitate collaboration, and information/knowledge exchange.

During 2016-17 existing internal committees and working groups were ongoing, and new working groups/committees were established to address various topics of interest and issues of concern, including the Grey-headed Flying-fox Working Group, the Beach Nourishment Implementation Working Group, and the Advisory Committee developed for the grant funded project on adapting priority coastal recreational infrastructure for climate change.

SCCG represented Member Councils on external committees and groups, advocating and representing member council interests, enabling greater collaboration and partnerships; providing an interface of communication between all levels of government, academic and research Institutions and other stakeholders; and ensuring SCCG remains up-to-date on emerging issues, trends, information, programs and best practice approaches.

Our quarterly Full Group and Technical Committee meetings provided a valuable forum for networking and peer to peer learning between Member Councils. Expert guest presenters and roundtable discussions enabled members to share information and knowledge, as well as successful policy and practices and lessons learned.

Following an SCCG Technical Committee Meeting guest presentation on the HarbourCare volunteer program, supported by North Sydney Council, two more of our Member Councils (Mosman and Woollahra) have now set up their own HarbourCare program, improving water quality and the amenity of the local environment within the SCCG region.

## Summerama Program

The SCCG Summerama Program celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> year in January 2017.

Summerama provides a platform for the community to enjoy, learn about and interact and connect with Sydney's coastline through fun filled and family orientated coastal activities, from kayaking, snorkelling, boat and adventure tours to rock pool rambles, walk 'n' talks and surf safety.

Summerama 2017 saw over 2,202 participants attend 84 activities across the 8 participating council areas.

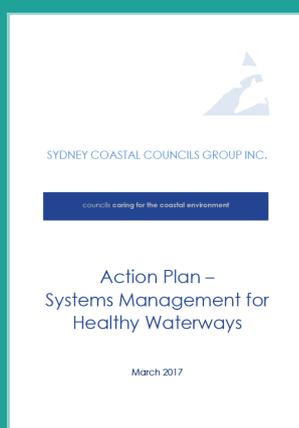


## Collaboration in Action!

During 2016-17 an Action Plan 'Systems Management for Healthy Waterways' was developed in consultation with SCCG Member Councils and Sydney Water.

The Action Plan includes actions across three categories: Regulatory and funding arrangements; System performance (stormwater and sewer network and non-compliant connections); and Information transparency, sharing and effective communication and engagement.

Specific actions provided in the Action Plan will also be included in the Schedule of Priority Activities in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SCCG and Sydney Water.



The Action Plan 'Systems Management for Healthy Waterways' has been endorsed by Sydney Water and SCCG Member Councils, and will be implemented from 2017/2018.

## Sydney Regional Approach to Flying-Fox Management

In March 2017, SCCG partnered with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage with the aim of collaboratively developing a regional approach to Grey-headed Flying-fox (GHFF) management.

The approach has two key goals:

1. Improve conservation outcomes for GHFF
2. Reduce conflict between GHFF and local communities.

Initial activities include assembling GIS mapping and establishing a working group made up of government, non-government organisations and experts in the field. The first working group meeting was held on 14 June 2017.



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# GOAL 2: Capacity Building



Develop and exchange knowledge and tools to support the role and build the capacity of Member Councils.

## Strategies

- 2.1 Provide accurate, timely and relevant information on sustainable coastal management
- 2.2 Build Member Council and stakeholder capacity to advance sustainable coastal management
- 2.3 Identify and secure external funding and support from Governments and other sources
- 2.4 Build Member Councils' capacity to engage with the Federal and State Governments and stakeholders to advance sustainable coastal management
- 2.5 Support Member Councils to engage with the community to advance sustainable coastal management

## Summary

Two of the SCCG's largest and priority grant projects were implemented and completed with fantastic outcomes and achievements, namely the 'Implementing and Embedding an Emergency Management Health Check for Local Government Stage 2' and 'Sydney's Salty Communities Turning the Tide on Blue-Green Carbon' program.

SCCG have been and will continue to work with our partners to deliver the tools and outputs of the Salty Communities Program, including the Connected Corridors for Biodiversity mapping, the Climate Ready Tool developed for SCCG by CSIRO, and the Climate Ready Workshop series and Business Case process implemented utilising Waverley Council as a case study resource.

SCCG also submitted and supported multiple grant project proposals, where outcomes would address needs and build the capacity of our members.



The Annual Funding Guide was developed for SCCG Member Councils, including information on relevant funding programs and award opportunities.

In 2016-17, SCCG continued to build Member Council and stakeholder capacity through regular updates on coastal related news and policy in the *Coastal Currents* quarterly newsletter and the monthly *Making Waves* online updates.

## CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS

- SCCG was successful in receiving grant funding, through the Building Resilience to Climate Change Program to implement the project ‘Adapting Priority Coastal Recreational Infrastructure for Climate Change’. SCCG has partnered with the National Committee on Coastal and Oceans Engineering (NCCOE) to deliver this project; with outputs including a checklist framework for recreational coastal infrastructure condition and vulnerability, and a decision-making framework and cost-benefit analysis for maintenance, renewal or replacement of priority coastal assets.
- SCCG signed a licence agreement with CSIRO to provide our Member Councils with urban heat mapping GIS data, to ensure our councils have a consistent layer of data across the SCCG region.
- SCCG has been actively involved in the SPLASH Network as a member of the Steering Committee working towards building capacity on climate resilience and water sensitive cities.

## Emergency Management Project

The emergency management project *Implementing and Embedding an Emergency Management Health Check for Local Government*, funded through the State Emergency Management Projects Program, was implemented and finalised during 2016/17. SCCG engaged consultants Janellis to develop and deliver an online Emergency Management Health Check Tool and resource toolkit for NSW local councils. Council staff, Regional Emergency Management Officers, Regional Organisations of Councils and combat agency staff participated in six workshops held across NSW to input into the Tool development process. Over 100 stakeholders took part in the engagement process, with additional support and guidance from Project Advisory Committee Members.

The Emergency Management Health Check Tool has been developed to enable NSW councils to better review and assess their preparedness, planning capability, resilience and resourcing in emergency management. The Tool covers four areas including; i) managing risks; ii) planning for emergencies and disasters; iii) building capability to respond effectively; and iv) providing assurance of capability and capacity. Reports generated on completion of the Tool enable councils to identify areas of high performance and areas for improved capability in readiness for emergency situations, providing evidence-based data to support a business case for internal and/or external funding/resourcing.

All NSW Councils are encouraged to utilise the resource toolkit and complete the online Emergency Management Health Check Tool at [www.emhealthcheck.com.au](http://www.emhealthcheck.com.au)

**Emergency Management Planning  
A Health Check for Local Government**

**Aim:** Develop a tool, the Health Check, to provide a means to assess the level of emergency management preparedness of Local Government

**Your Health Check Toolkit**  
Click on the icons below for more information

- PROJECT BACKGROUND**  
Get the backstory on the inspiration, drivers and stakeholders involved in this state-wide initiative.
- BENEFITS FOR COUNCIL**  
Review feedback on the benefits and value of the tool in better preparing councils and regions around NSW.
- GUIDES & TEMPLATES**  
Learn how to use the tool, interpret your results and create action plans to improve your readiness.
- ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS**  
Use our step by step approach to engaging stakeholders to facilitate completion of the Health Check.
- RESOURCE LINKS**  
All the resource links you will need for emergency preparedness and grant funding applications.
- CASE STUDIES**  
Read case studies on better practice local emergency management and building the readiness and resilience of communities.

[www.emhealthcheck.com.au](http://www.emhealthcheck.com.au)

NSW Ministry for Police & Emergency Services Australian Government

**ONLINE**  
Simple web-based tool delivered via email

**INTEGRATED**  
Aligned to existing government frameworks

**REPORTING**  
Analysis of council and regional readiness

**TRAINING**  
Guidance on how to improve resilience

# CASE STUDY:

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



After three years of implementation, the *Sydney's Salty Communities* grant program, funded by the Australian Government, was completed during 2016/17. The main and supplementary project rounds invested just under \$1.3 million in 17 projects, delivering works valued at approximately \$2.8 million.

In addition, a series of 'special projects' were completed, addressing gaps in coastal zone biodiversity management and issues identified by the Communities of Practice. Special projects have provided capacity building opportunities for biodiversity managers; an assessment of backyard habitat programs; an assessment of sea level rise and planning implications for salt marsh and mangroves habitats; and information on the value and importance of managing blue carbon habitats.

SCCG also partnered with CSIRO to deliver the *Climate Ready Tool*. Climate Ready Tool Workshops instructed natural resource managers and researchers in the use of the tool and provided opportunities for collaboration on evidence-based case study projects.

Throughout the project, the coming together of the Communities of Practice, made up of urban coastal biodiversity managers, educators, researchers and academics, worked together on similar issues sharing of resources, planning and problem solving, facilitated the development of evidence-based practice, planning and problem-solving, and the sharing of knowledge and resources to build learning and capacity. This Communities of Practice is an important legacy of the Sydney Salty Communities program.

Outcomes and on ground targets achieved through the main and supplementary round projects are provided in Table 1 below.

Measure	Target	Actual	Variance	% Variance
<i>No. of Community Participation &amp; Engagement Activities</i>	297	336	+39	+13%
<i>No. of Management Plans developed</i>	2	2	-	-
<i>Area covered by pest treatment (ha)</i>	323.2	1479.7	+1,156.5	+358%
<i>No. of individual animals or colonies killed/removed</i>	32	196	+164	+513%
<i>Total new area treated for weeds (ha)</i>	127.7	135	+7.3	+6%
<i>Total no. of plants grown &amp; ready for planting</i>	2,500	4,728	+2,228	+89%
<i>Area of revegetation works (ha)</i>	7.4	11.7	+4.2	+57%
<i>Kilograms of seed sown (kg)</i>	2	2	-	-
<i>No. of plants planted mature height &gt;2m</i>	7,105	9,414	+2,309	+32%
<i>No. plants planted</i>	59,588	65,118	+5,530	+9%
<i>Average survivability of tubestock and seed stock (%)</i>	85.5%	88.6%	+3%	+3.6%
<i>No. of plants surviving with mature height &gt;2m</i>	6,128	8,389	+2,261	+37%



Case Study examples of Supplementary round projects, are provided below.

### ***Biodiversity Restoration Dee Why Lagoon, Northern Beaches Council***



This project took a whole of lagoon approach to restore and reduce impacts of urbanisation, to restore ecosystems and to protect species diversity. The council worked in collaboration with Birdlife Australia and, through a fauna fair and other workshops, engaged with the community to educate them on lagoon health and climate change. The project established a seed bank using a mix of seed provenance from this and other lagoon systems. The project also conducted fauna surveys and pest management to support native populations, and mapped tree hollows to better understand habitat in the area. By working with the community NBC aims to reduce future impacts on the lagoon system. The project vastly exceeded its plant propagation of 500 plants, delivering 2,425 tubestock ready to be planted.

### ***Biocontrol in Warriewood Wetlands, Northern Beaches Council***



This project aimed to control the growth and spread of *Salvinia*, a water weed which was choking the Warriewood Wetland EEC. The project trialed biological control in Sydney through the introduction of the cyrtabagous weevil at Warriewood, and combined this with mechanical and physical control. The project dealt with flooding which washed out some of the weevils and some of the *Salvinia*, as well as temperature issues which influenced weevil growth and breeding. A good relationship was forged with Hawkesbury River County Council which also uses the weevils to manage *Salvinia*. The project engaged with local schools to educate the students on the importance of fragile environments in terms of biodiversity as well as community health and enjoyment.

### ***Fisher Bay Restoration, Northern Beaches Council***



This project worked to restore coastal remnant vegetation in 6 ha of high use bush (the Manly Scenic Walkway) linked to Sydney Harbour National Park in the east and Garigal National Park in the west. The vegetation was mostly Littoral Rainforest. There has been a substantial reduction in Weeds of National Significance and noxious and environmental weeds. The project engaged area residents and nearby community members in events and ongoing activities which sought to increase knowledge of the area's environmental significance and encourage stewardship of the reserve, including activities which seek to improve backyard habitat function. The project more than doubled its target for plantings, with 1,043 plants planted. These had a 6-month survival rate of 93%, well ahead of their 85% target.

## **Hollows as Homes, Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust**



Community members were engaged in Hollows as Homes workshops run in collaboration with councils, to teach the community to observe and record the attributes of hollow bearing trees, and to monitor wildlife use of hollows. As a result of the project 557 tree hollows and nest boxes have been reported by 374 people. The project is developing further activities to engage with schools, and the project will continue with workshops for councils on developing management plans which promote tree hollow retention.

## **Fishermans Walk, Northern Beaches Council**



The project delivered an improved wildlife corridor linking Endangered Ecological Communities of Curl Curl to the coastal corridor of Freshwater/McKillop Park, with the assistance of community, contractors and corporate volunteers. The project propagated over 2,300 native plants, and over 4,200 plants of 30 different species were established to restore areas degraded by weeds of national significance. A percentage of plants were propagated from flora further north of the area to improve climate change biodiversity resilience.

## **Connected Corridors for Biodiversity, SSROC**



Mapping from SCCG and SSROC Member Councils was collated and consolidated into a single GIS layer providing a connected corridors for biodiversity map across the region. As a result opportunities for connectivity and contiguity across council boundaries were identified. Greater Sydney Local Land Service will host the mapping for the next four years. To support this GIS layer a review of existing tools, programs and incentives to promote conservation on privately owned land was undertaken and a guidance document developed for councils.

## **Backyard Habitat Review**



The Australian Research Institute for Environment and Sustainability (ARIES) was commissioned by the SCCG to conduct a review of backyard habitat programs. The guiding research question was *What are the most effective tools available to council to encourage biodiversity on private land?*

The aim of the review was to examine backyard native flora and fauna habitat programs, and produce a summary, via a series of case studies, to build councils knowledge and capacity to implement similar programs, which will engage the community in achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes.

A questionnaire was distributed to councils regarding their backyard habitat programs and further interviews were undertaken throughout the process to gain comprehensive information and feedback. Three external programs also contributed material including the Birds in Backyards, Backyard Buddies and Habitat Stepping Stones programs.

# Mangrove & Saltmarsh Threat Analysis



SCCG engaged the University of Wollongong, in partnership with Macquarie University, to undertake a [Mangrove and Saltmarsh threat analysis](#). Given its extraordinary relative importance as habitat, as Blue Carbon storage, and for fisheries, the aim of the project was to provide knowledge of the potential impacts of sea-level rise on mangrove and saltmarsh and policy and management actions that can be implemented to improve ecosystem outcomes for mangrove and saltmarsh in the Sydney Region. Key elements of this project include:

- review of the pressures and impacts on mangrove and saltmarsh in the Sydney Region;
- preparation of a first pass assessment of the vulnerability of mangrove and saltmarsh to inundation and erosion related to sea-level rise and other climate related processes;
- higher resolution assessment of their vulnerability to sea-level rise using spatial modelling approaches integrated with available datasets; and
- overview of adaptation barriers and opportunities, including strategic planning activities that can be implemented to improve the ecosystem services provided.

## Salty Program Fact Sheet Series

This project has produced six fact sheets (shown below) covering some of the many outcomes and learnings from the program. All are [available for download](#) and topics covered are:

[Adaptation & the Climate-Ready Tool](#); [Planning for Climate Change](#); [Blue Carbon](#); [Connecting People & Nature](#); [Engaging Communities](#); and [Fox management](#).



Sydney's Salty Communities program was delivered by Sydney Coastal Councils Group through funding from the Australian Government.



Australian Government



SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP

## GOAL 3: Advocacy



Provide a regional and cohesive voice representing Member Councils.

### Strategies

- 3.1 Strengthen SCCG participation and influence in the development and review of Government policy, legislation, activities and programs
- 3.2 Present and raise the profile of Member Council interests at appropriate forums
- 3.3 Raise awareness of regional coastal issues in the media

### Summary

Advocacy was a major focus for the SCCG in 2016-17, taking three main forms; i) formal submissions to government; ii) participation in relevant external committees and/or advisory bodies, and/or; iii) direct communications / correspondence with government agencies and elected representatives.

### Submissions 2016-17

- [Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms](#)
- [NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment](#)
- [Draft District Plans and Towards Our Greater Sydney 2056](#)
- [Planning Legislation Updates](#)
- [Senate Inquiry into the Efficacy and Regulation of Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures](#)
- [Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy](#)
- [Australian Government Inquiry into Flying-fox Management in the Eastern States](#)

### District Plans

SCCG prepared a submission on 'Towards Our Greater Sydney 2056' and the North, Central, South District Plans that make up the SCCG region. SCCG key points of note raised include:

- The catchment and natural system boundaries should be used to address cross boundary governance issues.
- 'Water sensitive cities' principles should be further integrated into the district plans, ensuring these principles are built in to future planning on a city scale.
- The green grid should link to the SSROC/SCCG Connected Corridors for biodiversity habitat mapping ensuring that the green grid considers and enhances habitat corridors as well as green space.
- It is essential that planning and management of the blue and green grids are integrated as the two are explicitly linked.
- The district plans will need to adequately balance productivity, livability and sustainability in a triple bottom line approach.

## Coastal Management SEPP

SCCG provided a strong voice on the coastal reforms, and met with all relevant government departments and stakeholders during the submission period of the Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP).

Through a comprehensive advocacy campaign targeted at the state government and the Hon. Rob Stokes (the Planning Minister at this time), SCCG was instrumental in informing the decision by state government to exhibit the Coastal Management SEPP. SCCG was also successful in advocating that the SEPP include mapping of Coastal Wetlands and Littoral Rainforest within the Sydney region.

The SCCG submission on the SEPP was prepared with input and advice from the SCCG Coastal Reforms Committee. Key recommendations were:

- SEPP to include the Sydney regional coastal inundation mapping prepared by CSIRO on behalf of the SCCG, as well as other existing local and state hazard data, to provide greater transparency on known coastal hazards.
- SEPP to define 'environmental protection works', and incorporate considerations for potential impacts to ecological values and assets into the development approval process.
- Development of guidelines and triggers for councils to use in assessment, and clarification of how a consent authority can be 'satisfied' that a proposal meets certain thresholds.
- Public Authorities intending to carry out development be required to consult with councils in the initial stages.
- A consistent approach to defining and mapping the NSW coast in its entirety.



## Land Management & Biodiversity Conservation

Key points as addressed in the SCCG submission are as follows:

- An enactment date of 25 August was determined in advance of the public exhibition period and there was insufficient detail on exhibition with key documentation central to the efficacy of the reforms either missing or not developed, including the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map, Vegetation SEPP, the Sensitive Values Biodiversity Land Map, and several codes.
- The Reforms aspire to achieve 'no net loss' of biodiversity, yet represent an overall weakening of NSW biodiversity conservation regulations. The removal of the 'improve or maintain' requirements for biodiversity conservation has been superseded by 'avoid, minimise, offset', with a primary focus on offsetting.
- There was a focus on clearing of native vegetation in rural areas, producing regulations and a vegetation clearing threshold that are largely unsuitable in their application within an urban context. Urban areas are comprised of much smaller areas of remnant vegetation which may include threatened or endangered ecological communities, and play a significant role as habitat, foraging areas and/or corridors for native fauna, yet are afforded less biodiversity value due to their small size, with a real risk that small areas of vegetation could be cleared in its entirety either through one development or incrementally overtime.
- A comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework/process is essential to evaluate outcomes of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation, Biodiversity Assessment Method and the Biodiversity Offset Scheme. The Biodiversity Conservation Trust must ensure it is accountable and transparent in its annual reporting, and all reports must be made publicly available.

# Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures

SCCG gave evidence at the public hearing of the Senate Inquiry into the Efficacy and Regulation of Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures, held on 16 March 2017. Key recommendations highlighted include:

- Deterrent measures must consider the role of sharks as apex predators in the ecosystem, and any adverse impacts that nominated measures might have on shark species and ecosystems as a whole.
- Effective collaboration and engagement between State and Local Government, and the Tourism Industry to deliver a comprehensive education program and consistent messaging targeted at local communities, primary user groups and tourists, ensuring increased empowerment for decisions around personal risk, responsibility and behaviours.
- Support for deployment of targeted non-lethal mitigation and deterrent measures.
- Decision-making around appropriate mitigation and deterrent measures, and the development and implementation of these measures, needs to be based on a balance of concerns including tourist/public safety, evidence based economic impacts on industry, and the conservation and welfare of target and non-target species to ensure sustainable marine management.

## National General Assembly of Local Government

SCCG Member Councils attended the National General Assembly of Local Government, held 18-21 June 2017, with Willoughby and Inner West Councils putting up motions based on the SCCG 2016 Key Coastal Management Policy Recommendations [document](#). The motions can be viewed in the 2017 National General Assembly [Business Papers](#).

The motions called on the Government to commit to developing a national coastal policy, national marine management strategy, renew and/or develop a funding program for coastal based activities and CoastCare, addressing coastline hazard and risk, climate change adaptation, water security planning solutions, and implementation of recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into the Threat of Marine Plastic Pollution. This was a great achievement with all motions, bar one, being endorsed.

## Plastic Bags

SCCG wrote a letter to the Premier of NSW, The Hon Gladys Berejiklian, on behalf of our Member Councils, advocating for a ban on single-use plastic bags.

The impact of plastics on marine life and the environment is substantial and well documented. According to the Australian Marine Conservation Society, Australians use around 10 million plastic bags a day, equivalent to 3.9 billion a year.

Localised efforts of Member Councils, community groups, and businesses need the backing of state government legislation. SCCG will continue to support a single-use plastic bag ban for NSW.



## GOAL 4: Research

Identify and address current and emerging regional coastal issues.



### Strategies

- 4.1 Identify current and emerging priority issues
- 4.2 Promote and distribute relevant research outcomes to inform best-practice management
- 4.3 Enhance the research capacity of the Secretariat and Member Councils

### Summary

During 2016-17, the SCCG continued to engage with our government and academic partners and other stakeholders to further our knowledge on priority issues, and to promote and distribute relevant research outcomes to our Member Councils.

SCCG partnered with NCCARF (National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility) as a Tool Implementation Partner for [CoastAdapt](#), to provide support, input, guidance and advice throughout the development of the Tool and testing, promotion of the final product.

### Estimating Coastal Values

SCCG is collaborating with the Office of Environment and Heritage, Eurobodalla Shire Council and Department of Primary Industries to support the CSIRO project 'Estimating Coastal Values using Multi-criteria and Valuation Methods'. Funded by the NSW Environment Trust, the project aimed to estimate economic values for key coastal assets used to assist coastal planning and decision making. A survey of over 1400 NSW coastal residents was conducted to estimate preferences for conservation of coastal assets, and their willingness to pay to protect these assets. Results show that over 85% of NSW coastal residents were prepared to pay to improve coastal protection, while 1% did not believe the coasts needed protection. The greatest value was associated with sandy beaches, followed by sandy seabed and headlands. Results also indicated that Sydney residents valued coastal assets less than non-Sydney residents in that they were willing to pay less for asset protection, but had a higher use value for these assets, and were willing to pay more for this use.

### Community Adaptation to Coastal Inundation

SCCG partnered with UNSW Researchers on a NSW Government State Emergency Management Project entitled 'Community Understanding of Coastal Erosion: Improving Resiliency and Preparedness to Coastal Storms and Sea Level Rise'.

The project targets selected NSW communities through surveys and interviews to gauge their perceptions of how coastal hazards will affect them in the immediate and long-term future. These communities represent a cross section of perspectives and values and will include individuals either directly affected or not affected by coastal erosion. Through this project, identifying areas of misunderstanding, miscommunication and misinformation will assist in the improvement of future community engagement efforts in regards to coastal erosion across NSW.

# Looking Ahead



2017/ 2018 will see the release of numerous government policy reform agenda's as well as the finalisation and enactment of key state government reforms in key areas of local government, coastal, marine, and biodiversity management, land district and land use planning.

The SCCG's focus and key activities for 2017/2018, as directed by the Strategic Plan, will include:

- Consultations with Member Councils to determine the future strategic direction, governance, and key services to be provided to members, in light of amalgamations and changing membership based on issues and needs, resulting in the development of a business plan.
- Building on and implementing the Activities Schedule of the Memorandum of Understanding with Sydney Water.
- Rolling out actions in the *Action Plan: Systems Management for Healthy Waterways*, working with Member Councils, Sydney Water and other stakeholders to implement strategic actions to improve integrated water management, water quality and ecosystem values in coastal Sydney.
- Acting as an effective conduit between Members to achieve collaboration, coordination and information sharing.
- Seeking new investment opportunities, in partnership with other stakeholders, to implement SCCG programs that address the contemporary and future needs and priorities of our Members.
- Implementation of the Coastal Recreational Infrastructure grant project, achieving applicable outputs for our members and councils across NSW.
- Continuing to position ourselves as a strong advocate on behalf of Member Councils during the finalisation of key government legislative and policy reforms.
- Addressing emerging issues such as climate change adaptation via sourcing supporting funding and direct participation in key national research and capacity building activities.

Strength of the SCCG rests in engagement and shared expertise of the elected representatives, executive and technical staff of our Member Councils, and the capacity of our Secretariat to facilitate coordination, collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the Group and provide general and specialised expertise to implement the Strategic Plan. With ongoing support we will continue to provide effective, efficient and well-directed services to members and their communities to advance the sustainable management of Sydney's coastal environment.





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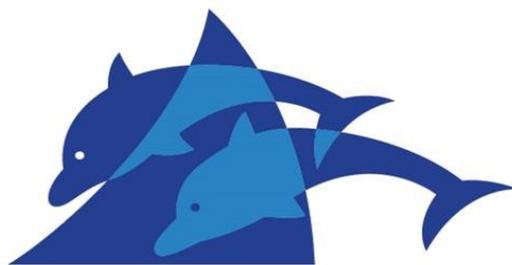
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