

COASTAL CURRENTS



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From the Chair

We have had a relatively mild winter, with Sydney experiencing its warmest July day on record at 26 degrees. We have also thankfully escaped a repeat of the 2016 June storms, allowing our beaches to recover.

SCCG has been busy putting the final touches on projects and advocating on behalf of our Member Councils. We held a workshop for our members on the Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms and put in a submission clearly stating how these reforms will not meet the stated objective of 'no net loss' of biodiversity.

The National General Assembly of Local Government was held from 18-21 June, with Willoughby City Council and Inner West Council putting up motions based on the SCCG 2016 Key Coastal Management Policy Recommendations [document](#), namely Motions 65, 65.2, 68, 69 and Motion V, which can be viewed in the 2017 National General Assembly [Business Papers](#). This was a great achievement with all motions being endorsed with the exception of the renewal of funding for community coastal programs and CoastCare.

It's finally good news for Sydney Council's undertaking legal challenges in the courts over forced amalgamations, with the Premier of NSW Gladys Berejiklian, making the call to scrap forced amalgamations just before the NSW Council elections on 9th September. Although this policy shift unfortunately comes too late for those councils that have already merged, for the six SCCG Member Councils taking up the fight against amalgamations this comes as a huge relief and provides certainty for the future of our councils and their communities.

We wish all of our Councillor Full Group representatives, that are standing for re-election, the very best of luck in the upcoming September Council elections. For those Councillors not standing again I would like to take this opportunity to thank you publicly for your efforts and contributions to the SCCG.

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, and represents nearly 1.5 million Sydneysiders.



www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au

Project Updates

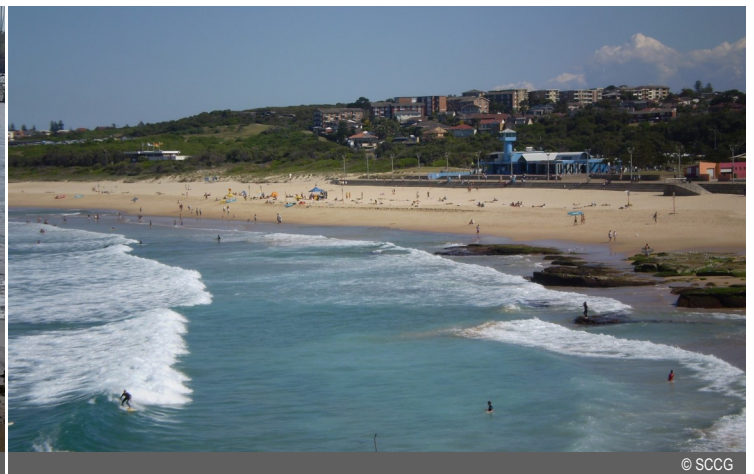
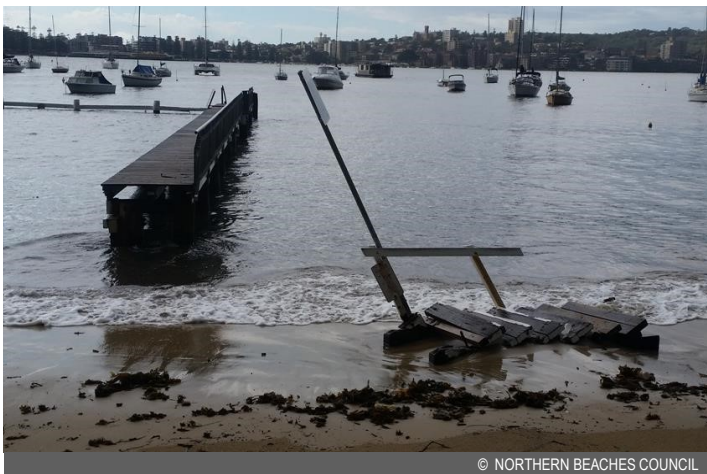
Adapting Recreational Infrastructure for Climate Change

The SCCG grant project funded under the LGNSW Building Resilience to Climate Change, is now underway. The project plan and the Steering Committee Terms of Reference have been developed, and several meetings have been held between SCCG and the project partner, the National Committee on Coastal and Oceans Engineering (NCCOE).

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held on 29 June, and MHL has since been engaged to deliver the project outcomes on behalf of SCCG and the NCCOE. The first phase of the project will involve the development of a survey for NSW Councils which will assist in identifying priority coastal recreational infrastructure assets. This survey will be completed and sent out over the coming months.

The Project will develop outputs including; i) a 'checklist' framework for recreational coastal infrastructure condition and vulnerability; ii) a decision-making framework and cost-benefit analysis for maintenance, renewal or replacement.

Approximately six case studies will be developed across nominated council areas based on identified priority assets. Through the outcomes of this project, Councils will be better placed to adapt to the pressures of climate change, increasing resilience to their coastal infrastructure.



A Council/Community Collaboration



HarbourCare is a community volunteer program that has long standing in the North Sydney LGA, with North Sydney Council supporting volunteers to take action on pollution in Sydney Harbour through clean ups and litter removal from foreshores and beaches, since 2012. The community HarbourCare volunteers play a vital role in maintaining the amenity of the local environment, removing pollutants, improving water quality, and capturing and recording data on tonnes of rubbish collected for their local council.

Following a presentation from HarbourCare volunteer Michael Stevens, at the SCCG Technical Committee Meeting in February 2016, Mosman Council commenced the HarbourCare program within their local area in June 2016. Most recently Woollahra Council launched the HarbourCare program on 7 June 2017 with over 130 people attending a film screening of 'A Plastic Ocean' and chairing a panel session with Tim Silverwood, with information provided on how to become a HarbourCare volunteer.

Volunteers are provided with personal protective equipment such as gloves, and as there is no specific schedule, the days/hours of work can be whatever each individual volunteer is willing or able to contribute.

To learn more about HarbourCare or to sign up as a volunteer, check out the respective [North Sydney](#), [Mosman](#) and [Woollahra](#) Council websites. Don't live in those areas? Why not encourage your local Council to start a HarbourCare program.

Advocacy

Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms

SCCG provided a submission on the Biodiversity Reforms which can be viewed [here](#). Key observations made based on the reforms include:

- An enactment date of the 25th of August was already predetermined in advance of the documentation going on exhibition, indicating that the process was already largely in place.
- Key documentation central to the efficacy of the reforms was either missing or had not yet been developed. This included the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map (NVRP), the Vegetation SEPP, the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy, the Sensitive Biodiversity Values Land Map and several Codes. There was insufficient detail on exhibition to effectively comprehend and critique the Reforms in its entirety.
- 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' requirement of biodiversity conservation has been superseded by 'avoid, minimise, offset', where the reforms focus primarily on offsetting, the least preferable option in the hierarchy of action. The 'Variation Rules' are a further indicator that biodiversity conservation is not the primary consideration in decision making, even though this is a stated objective of the Reforms.
- While the Reforms are applicable across NSW, there is 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 native and non-native 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 under the Reforms, 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 over time.
- The Reforms place emphasis on the perpetuity of biodiversity stewardship sites and yet the timeframe for management plans/actions and offset credits is 20 years only. There is also insufficient detail on monitoring, compliance and reporting requirements to ensure that biodiversity stewardship sites and/or set aside areas are appropriately managed and maintained over time.
- It is essential that a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework/process be put in place to evaluate the outcomes of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation, the 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.

Biodiversity Offset Scheme Training

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) is sponsoring up to 500 local government places for training on the biodiversity offset scheme during August. The training will be applicable to council staff involved in development assessment and approvals relevant to the biodiversity reforms. Click [here](#) to enquire and register your interest.

SCCG Beach Nourishment Working Group

At the SCCG Executive Committee meeting held on 7 March 2017, it was resolved that: A SCCG working group be established to include relevant state agencies and research stakeholders to pursue the advancement of broad sand nourishment activities in the Sydney region.

The aim of the working group is to provide advice and expertise to address and the application of broad scale regional beach nourishment programs. The first meeting of the Working Group was held on 27 July.

The focus areas of this working group include:

- To identify and document current information, trends, and impacts of broad scale beach nourishment programs (considering the context within NSW)
- To identify gaps in knowledge, research requirements, and critical evaluation
- To identify triggers and a pathway process for commencing and ceasing actions/programs
- To facilitate the development of authoritative resource materials suitable for high level consideration that identifies needs and processes to address beach nourishment programs
- To consult with relevant stakeholders to address the application of beach nourishment, where appropriate.



Coastal News



Plastic Free July

Did you take up the challenge and participate in Plastic Free July? If so you joined a million+ people worldwide to make an active choice to refuse single –use plastics.

Our Member Councils hosted Plastic Free July events and activities for their communities including workshops, film screenings, litter cleanup days, and keep cup giveaways.

In July 2017, retailers Woolworths, Coles and Harris Farm made the announcement that they will move towards banning single-use plastic bags in 2018. This was fantastic news, highlighting that the retail industry understands the need to respond and take a lead in social and environmental responsibility, particularly in the absence of any direction or decision from the State Government.

SCCG received a response from the Premier's office and from the EPA, regarding the SCCG letter advocating for a ban on single –use plastic bags. Unfortunately neither response gave any indication that the NSW Government was considering a ban on single-use plastic bags. NSW lags behind other states and territories, South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the ACT who have already banned the single-plastic bag, and Queensland which announced a ban from 2018.

Climate Council

The Climate Council has officially launched a new national program—the Cities Power Partnership. The partnership with local councils promotes and encourages the transition towards greener, efficient and resilient communities, through climate change action, including switching to renewable energy, sustainable transport, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Find out more about the [Cities Power Partnership](#).

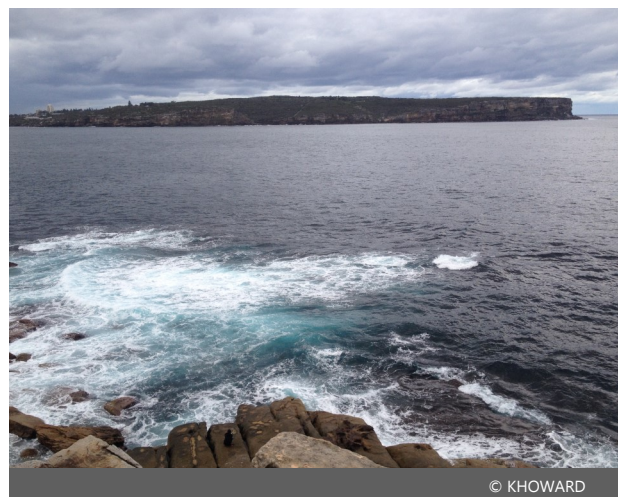
A Whale of a Time

Sunday 25 June was the national humpback whale migration census day, hosted by ORRCA. Community members, NPWS, and volunteers were out in force at five National Park vantage points along the NSW coast, to count the number of whales passing by. The result of the census day count has not yet been published, although it is expected that around 30,000 humpback whales will migrate along the NSW east coast this year.

Click [here](#) for information on the 'Wild About Whales' App.

NSW Coastal Conference

[Registrations](#) are now open for the annual NSW Coastal Conference, a successful coastal industry event spanning 26 years. The conference is to be hosted by Port Stephens Council from 8-10 November 2017.



CoastSnap



This is an innovative citizen science partnership between the Office of Environment and Heritage, UNSW Water Research Laboratory and Northern Beaches Council.

Community beach monitoring photo-point fixtures have been established at two beaches, Manly Beach (South Steyne) and North Narrabeen Beach. Interested community members can become citizen scientists by using the photo-point fixtures to capture an accurate photo of the state of the beach and shoreline position.

These photos are collected and stored in the CoastSnap community beach monitoring database, and are processed into time-lapse images capturing the shoreline position and beach width over time, and providing a record of beach erosion, recovery cycles and long-term trends.

Community photos can be submitted via e-mail at Coast.Snap@environment.nsw.gov.au or by posting to the CoastSnap Facebook [page](#). For more information click [here](#).

If you are interested in establishing a CoastSnap station within your council area, contact Michael Kinsela, Office of Environment and Heritage at Michael.Kinsela@environment.nsw.gov.au, or Mitchell Harley, Water Research Laboratory at m.harley@unsw.edu.au

Just for Interest

CoastalWatch features a 28 minute documentary entitled 'The Biggest East Coast Swell of a Generation', put together from footage of the June 2016 storms, captured by the CoastalWatch community. Watch the documentary [here](#).