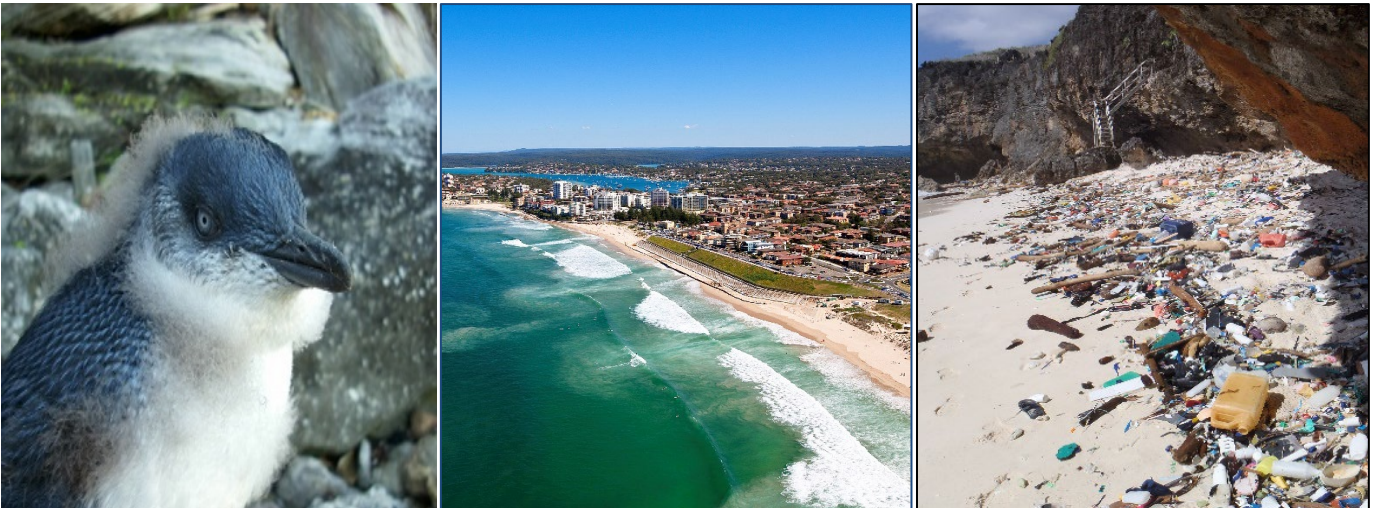


**SYDNEY COASTAL
COUNCILS GROUP**

Recommendations on Key Coastal Management Issues

NSW State Government Election 2019

This document has been prepared for the information and response of all political parties contesting the 2019 State Election



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INTRODUCTION

The [Sydney Coastal Councils Group](#) (SCCG) is a Regional Organisation of Councils representing nine councils in the Sydney coastal region. The SCCG's mission is to lead sustainable management of the coast through collaboration, capacity building, advocacy and research.

More than 85% of Australians live within 50 kilometres of the coast and the coastal population continues to grow, placing increasing pressures on natural values. The sustainable management of the NSW coast now and in the future, requires coordinated action.

With ongoing increases in population, development, commercial, and recreational pressures facing the NSW coastal zone there is an urgent need to increase the role of the NSW Government in providing leadership, guidance and support for sustainable coastal management.

The upcoming State Election presents an opportune time for political parties to review and reaffirm their commitment to sustainably manage our coast. As such, we have formulated key policy positions and associated recommendations that we believe will contribute to the sustainable management of the NSW coast in the immediate future. These key coastal management issues are provided below:

- 1. Urban Sustainable Water Management**
- 2. Climate Change Adaptation in the Coastal Zone**
- 3. Action on Plastics Pollution**
- 4. Funding for Coastal Programs in Greater Sydney**
- 5. Marine Biodiversity Conservation**

The SCCG requests the position of your party on the above key coastal management issues and the recommendations for each issue provided in this document.

The SCCG asks all major parties contesting the 2019 state election to provide a response to our policy recommendations by **28th February 2019**.

The SCCG will be disseminating the information provided by each party to our Member Councils prior to the election.

1. Urban Sustainable Water Management

Desired Outcome: State Government policy direction, and action to achieve sustainable and integrated water management for urban cities.

According to the ABS, New South Wales is projected to remain the largest state, reaching over 9 million people by 2027. Sydney is projected to increase from 65% of New South Wales' population in 2017 to 68% in 2027. Population growth will drive a significant rise in the demand for infrastructure services, particularly in capital cities or coastal urban areas.

This population growth will impose additional demands and pressures on aging urban water infrastructure, leading to more frequent overflows, leaks, flooding and shortages. Adding to this is the increased likelihood of extreme weather events such as droughts, storms or floods under a changing climate. Conserving water supplies, managing water services and infrastructure, and ensuring water security will be critical components for NSW.

Aging water infrastructure or assets that are not purpose built to cope with a broad range of conditions, are particularly vulnerable, leading to asset failure and increased renewal and replacement costs. It is recommended that a long-term investment program be developed to assist local Councils and water utilities fund the management and maintenance of water infrastructure.

Urban development also increases the area of impervious surfaces within a catchment, generating larger volumes of stormwater runoff. This increases the pressure on stormwater infrastructure and contributes to poor water quality, carrying pollutants such as oils, heavy metals and nutrients to our waterways, which negatively impact on ecosystem and public health. Water pollution hotspots occur throughout the Sydney Coastal Councils Group region caused by stormwater pollutants and or sewer contamination from overflows or ocean outfalls. In order to achieve better water quality for all our waterways, including Sydney Harbour, there needs to be collaboration by local and state government. In recognising the challenges, there is a need to manage water in the urban context as an integrated interconnected system in order to create sustainable, liveable cities.

Many local councils and water utilities are already utilising more efficient, decentralised approaches to conserve potable water and capture stormwater runoff. Increased water efficiency measures can lessen the demand for potable water supplies in urban cities, resulting in greater environmental benefits and a sustainable water supply in the future. To achieve this outcome there needs to be direction, leadership, commitment and investment from the NSW Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop an Urban Water Policy and an Integrated Water Management Strategy for the Greater Sydney region addressing water security solutions and best practice water management principles for urban areas.
- Incorporate best practice Water Sensitive Urban Design model provisions /Sustainable Urban Water Management Principles into the standard planning instruments (LEP/DCP).
- Review BASIX to enhance and ensure the best practice implementation of Water Sensitive Urban Design into all new developments and retrofitting into existing developments.
- Commit to a long-term investment program for the management and maintenance of water infrastructure in cities.
- Introduce a standard requiring Water Utilities, as a minimum, to undertake secondary treatment of sewage released from ocean outfalls.

2. Climate Change Adaptation in the Coastal Zone

Desired Outcome: State Government strategy on climate change adaptation and resilience.

Climate change projections for NSW suggest an increase in maximum temperatures by 0.4-1⁰c by 2030 and hot days above 35 degrees, with more fire danger days in summer and spring, and a variation in rainfall, with rainfall increasing in summer/autumn and decreasing in spring/winter. Climate change will have a significant impact on the operations and management of public assets and the wellbeing of local communities.

A number of NSW Councils have undertaken local climate change adaptation planning, however there is no consistency across the state. Previously the NSW Government developed sea level rise benchmarks providing guidance and impetus for inclusion in Council policy and on-ground works. The removal of these benchmarks was a step backwards and saw a decline in proactive action and preparedness of some local councils/communities.

A state-wide Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, including sea level rise benchmarks, is needed to guide local government, facilitating adaptation to climate impacts in the coastal zone and enhance community resilience. This Strategy could provide an overarching framework for councils' Coastal Management Programs. It should be developed via a partnership between State and Local Governments and their communities and include a long-term resourcing plan for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Establish a NSW Strategy for climate change adaptation and resilience comprising the following:

- Processes for the integration of climate change adaptation into local/state strategic planning.
- A system for gathering, storing and reporting information/mapping on climate change risks, exposure, impacts and vulnerability.
- Reinstatement of state-wide sea level rise benchmarks and associated policy and implementation guidelines for Local and State Governments.
- Clarification of liability issues in relation to coastal inundation, present and future.
- Strategies for engaging the community and all relevant stakeholders in climate change adaptation projects.
- Engagement/education materials for communities in becoming climate change resilient, building on work done through the 'Resilient Sydney' project.

3. Action on Plastic Pollution

Desired Outcome: State Government leadership, strategy and action to reduce plastics impacting on marine and coastal environments.

Typically, 50 – 80% of the waste that accumulates on beaches, the ocean surface and the seabed is plastic. Plastic debris including plastic bags, are not only an aesthetic concern for our marine environment but also threatens marine fauna through entanglement and ingestion.

Microplastics absorb and concentrate persistent organic pollutants, providing a pathway for entry into the food web and onto the dinner table. Alarming quantities of microplastics have been detected in marine habitats around the world, including our own iconic Sydney Harbour. Synthetic fibres from clothing also make up a significant proportion of microfibers in the marine environment and in the stomach contents and tissues of fish. These fibres are too small to be filtered out by sewage treatment plants, but a filter on washing machines could be a solution.

SCCG Member Councils are already undertaking multiple initiatives to reduce the volume of plastic debris entering our estuaries and ocean. Whilst the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Environment Protection Authority have introduced successful education programs to reduce litter this is tackling the issue 'at the end of pipe' rather than at the source.

The Australian Packaging Covenant is a great national initiative for industry to reduce the volume of plastic packaging waste produced. However, as a voluntary program, this falls short of achieving the packaging reduction targets required to significantly reduce the quantity of plastics that have the potential to end up in our landfills and waterways. Embarrassingly, the NSW State Government is the only Australian state/territory without a single use plastic bag ban in place.

The NSW State Government needs to take strong proactive action to reduce plastics at the source rather than end of pipe to minimise impacts on the marine and coastal environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement a single use plastic bag ban for NSW.
- Set mandatory targets for packaging reduction by Industry and implement an Industry education, auditing and reporting program
- Support research into reducing synthetic microfibres from entering the environment such as new, low-fibre-loss fabrics or washing machine filters.

4. Funding for Coastal Management Program Actions

Desired Outcome: Adequate funding for coastal management program (CMP) actions and funding established for community based coastal programs and initiatives.

Managing current coastal pressures, including population growth, development and coastal hazards, requires a significant increase in state government funding. Present and future pressures arising from sea level rise, increased storm intensity and inundation and flooding will further increase costs to local councils with respect to maintaining and restoring coastal infrastructure assets and recreational assets valued by the community, including beaches, parks and walking tracks; and continued access to the foreshore. Local councils and state government agencies are required to ensure that coastal assets are resilient to climate change impacts in the future.

With the *Coastal Management Act 2018* and associated polices now in force, it is prudent for local councils in collaboration with state government agencies, to develop CMPs. Whilst a funding program has been put in place for the delivery of CMPs, it is likely to fall short in terms of the actual funding required for necessary actions/works that these programs may identify and is unable to be applied by some councils due to the 50/50 funding contribution requirement which some councils are unable to match.

Local council and community coastal programs are important and should be supported. Other states have an active Coastcare program, whilst in NSW this program has faded into obscurity in recent years. Whilst Landcare Australia still supports Coastcare, this program is largely reliant on enthusiastic members of the community to form a group and or volunteer their time.

There is limited funding provided to Coastcare groups and the primary funding options include crowdfunding/fundraising or sponsorship which puts resource/time pressures on volunteers who may not have the skills in this area. Whilst community-based volunteer groups are vital in creating stewardship and connection to the coast it is recognised that community groups require the support and skills of local councils and/or regional/state government agency facilitators to run the program, as well as a stable source of government funding to enable continuity and success of the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establishment of a NSW based Coastcare Program, facilitated by Local Government and/or regional/state government facilitators to support local community coastal conservation and education initiatives; including the development of a long-term financial investment plan and state government grant program to fund Coastcare.
- Undertake a review of the future costs to local government associated with managing risks and liabilities of coastal hazards
- Review the funding model provided under the NSW Coastal Management Program with a view to providing long-term funding for local councils and reviewing the appropriateness of the 50/50 grant funding contribution requirement.
- Provide funding for the Greater Sydney region to undertake coastal/marine based programs included within the Marine Estate Management Strategy.

5. Marine Biodiversity Conservation

Desired Outcome: Establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative network of marine protected areas in the Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion

An independent scientific audit into marine parks in NSW¹ identified a conservation gap in the Hawkesbury Shelf marine bioregion which encompasses the Sydney region. The current NSW Government committed to enhancing the protection of marine biodiversity in this gap but has yet to be realised.

SCCG strongly supports the establishment of a marine park in the Sydney region and one which meets the conservation planning principles of comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness (CAR). CAR principles are critical to ensuring sustainable spatial management and protection of environment values. These principles are also critical to ensure s.22(1) of the *Marine Estate Management Act* regarding the purpose of marine parks are met.

The International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has recommended 10% of each country's marine ecological regions (i.e. habitat types) be conserved in marine protected areas, whilst recommendations in the scientific literature generally fall in the range of 20% to 40% of the ocean's environment in no-take areas. The NSW Marine Parks proposal identified approximately 2% of the Hawkesbury shelf marine bioregion as a sanctuary zone, with this small percentage being taken off the table by the Planning Minister prior to the end of the consultation period.

There is insufficient resourcing provided for compliance related to recreational fishing and the illegal taking of marine/intertidal species within intertidal protected areas and existing aquatic reserves.

Additional protection measures are also required to ensure the long-term survival of threatened and endangered populations such as the Little Penguin at Manly. During 2015-16 breeding season alone 27 breeding adults were killed via fox attacks. Irresponsible dog owners also cause stress and impact on fauna including migratory bird species.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduction of a Multi-Use Marine Park network within the Hawkesbury shelf marine bioregion that is comprehensive, adequate and representative, including no-take sanctuary zones.
- Development and delivery of a community education/engagement program to increase awareness of illegal recreational fishing activities and minimise illegal taking of marine/intertidal species (including spearfishing).
- Provide adequate ongoing funding and staff resourcing to implement a comprehensive on ground compliance program throughout NSW, in particular the greater Sydney region.
- Added conservation / protection measures to minimise disturbance of threatened and endangered populations, and migratory shorebird species, particularly during breeding/nesting periods.
- The deployment of non-lethal mitigation and deterrent measures for public safety with respect to sharks. The shark meshing program be phased off the NSW coast, to be replaced with targeted non-lethal alternatives of protection tailored to those that are primarily at risk (surfers). This could include a government subsidy hire program of devices for surfers.

¹ https://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/739434/Report-of-the-Independent-Scientific-Audit-of-Marine-Parks-in-New-South-Wales-2012.PDF



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