



## Media Release

17 September 2025

### Coastal Resilience Under Review: National and NSW Reports Highlights the Need for Greater Support for Coastal Councils

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) welcomes the release of two major reports that underscore the urgent need for coordinated action and greater support for local government to address coastal risks in NSW and across Australia.

The NSW Audit Office's Coastal Management Framework Audit identifies key gaps in how state agencies are supporting Councils in developing and implementing Coastal Management Programs (CMPs). CMPs identify local coastal hazards and outline actions to manage risks such as erosion, inundation, poor water quality and reduced ecological health. These programs are essential tools for building resilience and protecting coastal assets, ecosystems and communities.

The Audit found that the framework is not being effectively implemented to manage the NSW coastal environment. Seven years after the framework came into effect, most councils are still developing CMPs, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is not effectively overseeing or facilitating implementation. The Office recommends greater support to be provided to coastal councils which Sydney Coastal Councils Group has long advocated for.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Government's National Climate Risk Assessment, highlights sea level rise and coastal erosion as some of the most pressing climate hazards threatening Australia's coastal communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems. It provides a framework for prioritising adaptation actions which are identified in the recently released National Adaptation Plan. The plan recognises the need for the Australian Government to work with all levels of government to respond to these challenges through the delivery of mechanisms such as funding and consistency of policies.

Councillor Shannon Welch, Chair of the Sydney Coastal Councils Group, said:

"The National Adaptation Plan rightly calls for coordinated action, but without equitable funding, councils are left unable to implement the very measures the Commonwealth has prioritised. Coastal erosion and sea level rise are not future threats, they are happening now, and Sydney's coastal councils need urgent support."

Local governments play a frontline role in climate adaptation, yet many are struggling to access the resources needed to protect their communities and natural assets. Sydney, home to iconic coastlines and critical infrastructure, is particularly exposed. The Australian Government must ensure that funding mechanisms like the Disaster Ready Fund are



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accessible, transparent and fairly distributed, enabling councils to deliver on the national climate resilience agenda.

The development of CMPs in Sydney can be a complex process, particularly where multiple councils share interconnected coastal environments. Several CMPs are being developed collaboratively across local government boundaries to ensure consistent approaches to assessing and responding to sea level rise and other coastal hazards. These joint efforts also support more integrated and effective management of waterway health. One such example is the CMP for Sydney Harbour, which involves eight councils working together to address shared challenges and deliver coordinated outcomes for one of Australia's most iconic systems.

Sarah Joyce, Executive Director of the SCCG and Project Manager of the Outer Sydney Harbour CMP said:

“Sustained support is essential to develop and implement CMPs that effectively address the risks of climate change on our coasts. We call on the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to urgently commit to long-term funding, clearer policy guidance and greater support to help councils deliver the coastal resilience our communities need.”

Read the NSW Audit Office report: <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/coastal-management>

Learn more about the National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan: <https://www.acs.gov.au/pages/national-climate-risk-assessment>

Learn more about the Outer Sydney Harbour CMP: [Outer Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program - Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc](#)

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**End of Release**



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