

# COASTAL CURRENTS SPRING 2014

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP ED 73

## FROM THE CHAIR

As the newly elected Chairperson, it is with great pleasure that I bring you the Spring edition of our quarterly newsletter *Coastal Currents*. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the leadership and drive that Cr Cathy Griffin brought to the Group as Chairperson from 2012 to 2014. Cr Griffin has left big shoes to fill and I look forward to continuing to work with her as she assumes the role of Vice Chairperson (Coasts).

It's been a momentous few months for the Group, culminating in the 25 Year Anniversary Conference and Gala Evening on 29 August 2014. It was wonderful to see members and affiliates, past and present, come together to reflect on 25 years of coastal management history and scope future visions for the coast. We were honoured to welcome the NSW Environment Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, as a guest speaker on the night and we are most grateful to Sydney Water and

the Department of Planning and Environment for sponsoring the Conference.

Since our last edition of *Coastal Currents* there have been some significant developments in environmental news. There are reviews underway on biodiversity legislation and Commonwealth marine reserves, we've seen concerning changes to vegetation clearing laws in bushfire prone areas, the State Government has announced its reform package for Local Government and we've entered Stage 2 of the NSW coastal reforms. Our *Coastal News* section on page 3 provides an update on all of these developments and more.

Amidst all this, we have recently completed and launched two projects – *Becoming Social* and *Emergency Management Planning*. Refer to the Projects Update below for more information.

Cr Geoff Stevenson  
**SCCG Chairperson**



**SYDNEY COASTAL  
COUNCILS GROUP**

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The SCCG was established in 1989 to promote co-ordination between Member Councils on environmental issues relating to sustainable management of the urban coastal environment.

The Group consists of 15 Member Councils adjacent to Sydney marine and estuarine environments and associated waterways in Sydney; Botany, Hornsby, Leichhardt, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Pittwater, Randwick, Rockdale, Sutherland, Sydney, Warringah, Waverley, Willoughby and Woollahra. The Group collectively represent over 1.4 million Sydneysiders.

## SCCG PROJECTS UPDATE

### Becoming Social



This project is now complete and a project outcomes launch was held on 24 July 2014 at Customs House, Sydney. The launch provided an opportunity for participants to learn all about social media - connect with colleagues, demystify what platforms to use, increase confidence creating campaigns and get the project resources.

The Becoming Social project was designed to increase Councils' understanding and use of social media as a relationship and policy development tool to engage, consult and educate coastal communities in relation to local and regional coastal environmental issues.

Key project outcomes are:

- The Becoming Social web-based tool which assists users to make decisions about what social media platform to use based upon a project's key elements
- The Becoming Social online community platform where Member Councils can come together and discuss their needs, requirements or campaigns, and receive feedback from other representatives in the community
- The additional social media resources developed for councils available through the tool, such as monitoring a social media project
- The social media survey
- The social media literature review.

Project outcomes may be accessed from the project webpage:

[www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/becoming\\_social](http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/becoming_social) or the Becoming Social decision tool: [www.becomingsocial.com.au](http://www.becomingsocial.com.au)

### Emergency Risk Management: A Health Check for Local Government



On 17 September, we hosted a forum on Emergency Management Planning in Local Government. The event provided an opportunity to showcase the outcomes from this project, which is approaching completion.

There were presentations by Mr Phil Koperberg AO AFSM BEM and practitioners from local government with experience in improving capability and resilience in their organisations and communities. The speakers and supporting panellists engaged participants in a Q&A session to pursue key issues in more depth.



### SCCG Web Sites

[www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au](http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au)  
[www.summerama.com.au](http://www.summerama.com.au)  
[www.walkingcoastalsydney.com.au](http://www.walkingcoastalsydney.com.au)



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## SCCG PROJECTS UPDATE cont.

### Emergency Risk Management (continued)

The Health Check is a tool for Councils to self-assess their preparedness and capability for emergency management. The tool supports an integrated approach to emergency management across many functional areas as it builds on councils' roles in strategic planning, risk management, asset management, business continuity planning and WHS.

We consulted with 30 Councils across the State to trial and develop the Health Check. The feedback informed a revised format to improve engagement, ease of use, and reporting of outcomes. The Health Check is not an audit of what a council must do in emergency management, but an opportunity for council staff to explore options and priorities to develop a program relevant to their own circumstances and community needs. The SCCG welcomes the interest of councils in using the tool and all materials will be freely available.

The project has been made possible by funding from the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. For more information please visit the project web page: <http://bit.ly/18SOQzs>

### Sydney Harbour Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) Scoping Study

The Literature Review and draft Scoping Study are progressing. A key deliverable for the project consultant is to investigate, evaluate and synthesise literature and data related to management and use of the Harbour. The Project Advisory Committee and a stakeholder survey assisted to populate the literature evaluated. The consultant has completed a draft of the Literature Review, which was sent to the Advisory Committee for review and comment. The consultant is now addressing those comments and the final Literature Review will be available shortly.



For more information on the project visit: <http://bit.ly/1kkeMf2>

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

We have issued a Request for Quotations for a Coastal Biodiversity Literature, Data and Practice Review. We are also finalising recruitment for an officer to manage Stage 2 of the project. Meanwhile, the project's independent Reference Group is being formed. This group of eminent individuals will provide specialist technical input, guide and/or undertake research, review prioritisation and evaluate sub-projects under the devolved grants program. Members of the Reference Group have expertise in Sydney's coastal ecosystems, ecological restoration, urban biodiversity and organisational capacity-building and will provide help to achieve project outcomes.

We are also developing the process for assessing project proposals for Salty devolved grants. Funding will be available to fill research and policy gaps, provide key resources and to primarily undertake on-ground planting, weed control and rehabilitation of remnant coastal vegetation communities and key habitats across Sydney. Visit the project web page for more information: <http://bit.ly/ZqiGgK>



## MATTERS OF INTEREST

### SCCG Annual General Meeting

We held our AGM on 13 September 2014. Cr Geoff Stevenson of Randwick Council was elected Chairperson, replacing Cr Cathy Griffin of Manly Council who has been Chair of the Group since 2012 and will assume the position of Vice Chairperson (Ocean). The 2014-2015 SCCG Executive Committee was elected as follows:

Committee Position	Councillor	Council
Chairperson	Cr. Geoff Stevenson	Randwick
Vice Chairperson (Estuarine)	Cr. Lynne Saville	Willoughby
Vice Chairperson (Ocean)	Cr. Cathy Griffin	Manly
Treasurer (Honorary)	Cr. Peter Towell	Sutherland
Secretary (Honorary)	Cr. Leon Goltsman	Waverley
Member	Cr. Irene Doutney	City of Sydney
Member	Cr. Selena Griffith	Pittwater
Member	Cr. Greg Levenston	Woollahra

Our Executive Officer, Geoff Withycombe, provided an overview of the Group's activities and achievements during 2013-14. Highlights included:

- securing \$1.9M in successful grant applications
- facilitating 96 internal meetings and attending 94 external meetings
- facilitating 4 major forums and hosting 6 key events with partners
- receiving the 'Highly Commended' Award at the 2013 NSW Coastal Management Awards for our seawalls project and the 'Highly Commended' Award at the 2013 Resilient Australia Awards for our Landslide Risk Management website.

A copy of our 2013-14 Annual Report is available on request.

### SCCG 25 Year Anniversary

This year, we celebrate 25 Years of Caring for our Coast. Since our establishment in 1989, when we partnered with the EPA and the Water Board (now Sydney Water) to end shoreline sewage outfalls off Sydney's iconic beaches, we have grown to become a recognised leader in sustainable coastal and estuarine management. Now with 15 Member Councils, the Group represents over 1.4 million Sydneysiders.

On 29 August 2014, we hosted a Conference and Gala Evening to celebrate our Anniversary. The two events provided a unique opportunity to reflect upon the coast, unite Member Councils and key partners, both past and present, and promote engagement, dialogue, and visioning regarding future stewardship.



*Council representatives following Awards Ceremony*

At the Conference we traced the key historical issues and events that have shaped coastal management in Sydney and steered the work of the SCCG and its Member Councils over the last 25 years. The Gala Evening featured presentations from Environment Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, author and historian, Dr Ian Hoskins and ecologist and futurist, Dr Steven Cork. We also held an Awards Ceremony for our Member Councils (pictured above), presented by founding SCCG Chairperson and former Waverley Mayor, Ms Barbara Armitage OAM.

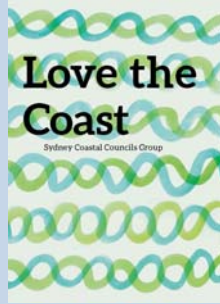
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## MATTERS OF INTEREST cont.

### SCCG 25 Year Anniversary (continued)

As part of our Anniversary celebrations we also commissioned curator and author, Ewen McDonald, to write a story capturing the history of the Group over its 25 years of operation. With artistic formatting and design from UTS design student Eva Kiss, the resulting publication, *Love the Coast*, provides a wonderful history of the Group and the social and political climate in which it was born and has since matured.



For more information on our Anniversary, including the Conference Outcomes Report and *Love the Coast*, visit: [www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sccg25years](http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/sccg25years)

### Review of SCCG Strategic Plan

The review of our Strategic Plan is progressing. Our new four-year Strategic Plan will shape operations from 2015 to 2019. The review has been guided by the advice of a Directional Committee and Member Council surveys. Outcomes from our Anniversary Conference will also inform the review and ensure that our new Plan is reflective of members' needs. The Plan will be launched at the end of the year. To view our current Strategic Plan, visit: <http://bit.ly/1DYqaqL>

## SUBMISSIONS, ADVOCACY, GRANTS AND AWARDS

### 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants 2014-15

Applications for the 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants 2014-15 are now open. The funding comprises up to \$2.5 million for environment focused projects and up to \$2.5 million for agriculture focused projects. Grants of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 will assist community groups and individuals to undertake projects to conserve and protect their local environment and/or to manage the natural resource base, contributing to outcomes in the national interest. Applications are invited until **2pm Monday 20 October 2014**. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1rhMKWm>

### Metropolitan Greenspace Program

The NSW Government invites applications to its Metropolitan Greenspace Program, a grants funding program for planning and improvement of regional open space in the greater metropolitan Sydney region. Applications are invited for capital works and planning projects, including walking tracks, bushland restoration, cultural heritage studies, and conservation management plans, until **Friday 31 October 2014**. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1tfXBgc>

### Environmental Award opportunities

#### NSW Coastal Management Awards

Nominations for the NSW Coastal Management Awards are closing soon. The annual Awards are presented to publicly recognise and acknowledge the contributions of individuals, groups, organisations and agencies toward the ecologically sustainable management of the NSW coastal zone. The Awards will be presented at the NSW Coastal Conference Dinner in November. Entries close **Friday 10 October 2014**. For more information, visit [www.coastalconference.com/#sthash.qMFxMEW.dpuf](http://www.coastalconference.com/#sthash.qMFxMEW.dpuf)

## COASTAL NEWS

### Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review

The Commonwealth Government has set aside a suite of management plans for Australia's marine reserves. The plans were due to come into effect in July 2014, but will be replaced by a new set of plans following a Marine Reserves Review recently commenced. The Government states it is delivering on its election commitment for a 'More Competitive and Sustainable Fisheries Sector'.

There will be an opportunity for written submissions and participation in an online survey as part of the review. For more information visit

<http://bit.ly/1oxNPVe>



Marine Reserves Map

### Climate Council report on coastal flooding risk



The Climate Council has released a report on climate change and coastal flooding. The report finds that Australia is highly vulnerable to increasing coastal flooding due to extensive development along the coast. Climate change will exacerbate coastal flooding and put many natural and built assets at risk.

The authors calculate that \$2.26 billion worth of infrastructure and homes would be at risk under a scenario of 1.1m sea level rise. They call for urgent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions this decade and beyond to avoid the most serious risks from rising sea levels and coastal flooding. More information can be found at [www.climatecouncil.org.au/coastalflooding](http://www.climatecouncil.org.au/coastalflooding)

### New laws on clearing in bushfire prone areas under review

Less than 2 months after its introduction, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has announced changes and a review into the *10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice*. The Code of Practice allows people who live in designated '10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement areas' to clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home and underlying vegetation (such as shrubs) within 50 metres of a home without seeking approval. Read more about the new code of practice on the NSW RFS website: <http://bit.ly/1Bzfs63>

Since the introduction of the Code on 1 August 2014, there have been significant concerns raised by a number of councils and community groups, relating to threatened species and ecological communities, inadequate consultation, lack of distinction between urban and bush land areas, and monitoring and compliance issues. In light of these concerns, at its AGM on 13 September 2014, the SCCG Full Group Committee resolved to write to the NSW Government seeking an immediate suspension of the Code and an urgent and independent review. Since then, the RFS has announced changes to the Code and a review. Submissions can be made by email to [10.50@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:10.50@rfs.nsw.gov.au) until 14 November 2014.



The NSW Parliamentary Research Service has prepared an e-brief which explains the current NSW regulatory regime, summarises the new changes and canvasses some stakeholder responses to the proposed reforms. It also examines the related Victorian regulatory scheme. To access the e-brief, visit: <http://bit.ly/1wWAGKf>

## COASTAL NEWS (cont.)

### Stage 2 Coastal Reforms

The NSW Government is looking to strengthen support for councils' coastal management through the stage 2 reforms. The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) would like to work with councils to develop improved guidance material to better support council decision making. It is envisaged that the improved guidance will consolidate existing coastal guidance and fill information gaps that currently exist. It will build on good practice already adopted by many councils. The guidance will provide government direction to support council coastal management decision-making.

Staff from OEH working on the reforms met with SCCG and Sydney Councils on 10 September to discuss the best way to work together to develop new coastal management guidance. The meeting was very productive and generated many useful ideas about how OEH could better support councils. OEH plans to hold workshops to define and scope the new guidance with councils and other NSW Government agency staff in November and December.

For more information visit the OEH website: <http://bit.ly/J6LHVC>

### Seawall at Old Bar rejected

The NSW Government has agreed to certify the Greater Taree Coastal Zone Management Plan prepared by council, subject to minor amendments, but has not supported construction of a seawall at Old Bar. The seawall was estimated to cost \$50 million with a lifespan of 50 years. The NSW Environment Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, noted that "the option to construct any protection structure at Old Bar is likely to transfer the problem to future generations to deal with, which is unacceptable." Greater Taree City Council will now work with OEH to consider options to relocate development that is exposed to coastal erosion.

To read the associated media release, visit: <http://bit.ly/ZtmOfS>

### 'Fit for the Future' – reforming Local Government

The NSW Government has announced reforms to Local Government. The *Fit for the Future* package is based on the Independent Local Government Review Panel's recommendations following three years of research and consultation. According to the Government, the package includes:

- \$258 million to assist councils who decide to merge and make the changes needed to provide better services to communities
- cheaper finance for councils to build and maintain necessary community facilities, saving them up to \$600 million
- up to \$100 million savings through reduced red tape and duplication
- improvements to the local government system,
- including the laws that govern it, the way the State works with councils and the support that councils receive.

Councils will have until 30 June 2015 to submit proposals on how they plan to be 'Fit for the Future'. These will be assessed by independent experts against independently-set criteria. More information is available at:

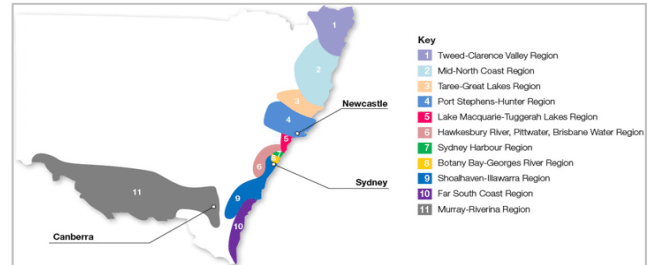
[www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au)



## COASTAL NEWS (cont.)

### Draft Regional Boating Plans under development

The Maritime Management Centre (MMC) and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) are undertaking a state-wide study of existing boating facilities and safety measures to inform the development of Regional Boating Plans for each of the major waterways in NSW. The study will identify actions required to enhance the boating experience across NSW by improving boating safety, boat storage and waterway access on major waterways.



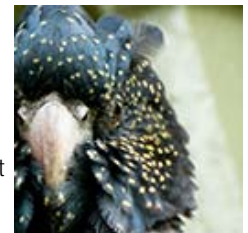
Regional Boating Plan areas

Draft plans have been released for a number of regions along the NSW coast. As each draft plan is produced, it is made available on the MMC website and comments can be made to [mmc@transport.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mmc@transport.nsw.gov.au).

For more information, or to view the draft plans, visit: [www.transport.nsw.gov.au/content/nsw-regional-boating-plans](http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/content/nsw-regional-boating-plans).

### Biodiversity Legislation Review

The State Government is currently reviewing Biodiversity legislation in NSW. An independent panel has been appointed to consider the policy settings, programs and funding arrangements that support the management of biodiversity, threatened species and native vegetation in the State. The review aims to establish simpler, streamlined and more effective legislation that will:



- facilitate the conservation of biological diversity
- support sustainable development
- reduce red-tape.

An Issues Paper was released for consultation in August and September. An Interim Report is due to be delivered to the Minister in October, with the Final Report completed by 18 December 2014. For more information visit: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodiversitylegislation/review.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodiversitylegislation/review.htm)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### 23rd NSW Coastal Conference: Ulladulla 11-14 November 2014

The 23<sup>rd</sup> NSW Coastal Conference will be held on 11-14 November in Ulladulla, NSW. The three day event is comprised of plenary sessions, concurrent sessions, field trips (addressing some of the local coastal, estuary and marine management issues), networking events and the Annual NSW Coastal Management Awards. To register, or for more information visit: <http://bit.ly/1jja7x1>