

COASTAL CURRENTS SUMMER 2014

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP ED 74

FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Summer edition of Coastal Currents. 2014 has been a busy year of anniversaries, projects, capacity building and advocacy for the Group. No doubt, a stand-out for the year was our 25th Anniversary, which we celebrated in August with a commemorative Conference and Gala Evening.

2014 has also seen a number of developments in Local and State Government, including the recent announcement of Stage 2 Coastal Reforms, changes to Local Government under *Fit for the Future* and a number of significant reviews into planning, Crown Lands, biodiversity and marine parks. Check out our Coastal News section on p. 3 for the latest on these developments.

Amidst all of this, the Group has maintained focus on our ongoing projects, a number of which have concluded in recent months, including our social media project *Becoming Social* and more recently our project on *Emergency Risk Management: Piloting a Health Check for Local Government*. Our Project Updates below

provides more information on this and other ongoing projects.

As summer descends, we are in full swing for Summerama 2015. Now in its 12th year, Summerama offers family-friendly coastal activities suited to a variety of ages and skill levels across our Member Councils during the month of January. Check out the update on p. 2 for more information and be sure to register for one of the exciting events on offer.

As we look ahead, 2015 is shaping up to be a big year for the Group. With a State election in March and outcomes from the reforms to coastal management and Local Government anticipated, we expect some significant changes to our operating environment. Nonetheless we will continue to work collaboratively with our Member Councils to lead sustainable management of our urban coastal environment. On behalf of the Group, I wish you a fun and safe Christmas and New Year and encourage you to get out and enjoy the wonderful coast which we are working hard to protect.

Cr Geoff Stevenson
SCCG Chairperson

SCCG PROJECTS UPDATE

Emergency Risk Management: Piloting a Health Check for Local Government

On 17 September 2014 at Town Hall, Sydney, the key project deliverables were launched. This event was headlined by Phil Koperberg, Chair of the State Emergency Management Committee.



The project, conducted over 18 months with a combined cash and in-kind budget of more than \$300,000, enhances councils' understanding and use of emergency management (EM) planning as a relationship and policy development tool to prepare for, and respond to, natural hazards.

This project explored current practice in NSW and reviewed best practice approaches from other states and internationally. The project manager, Dr Ian Armstrong, has now finalised all project deliverables, including a Literature Review, Review of Legislation, Project Report, Health Check tool and User Guide, a Fact Sheet and additional Resources for Local Government. These have been distributed to Member Councils.

We have recently sought funding via the NSW National Disaster Mitigation Program to undertake the second stage of this project - *Implementing and Embedding an Emergency Management Health Check for Local Government*. If successful this will employ an officer to:

- develop the Pilot Health Check into a fully functional and easy-to-use tool, enabling strategic assessment of EM in Local Government
- develop and implement a state-wide training program to embed the Health Check
- integrate EM-related actions across all relevant functional areas of Local Government including Integrated Planning and Reporting Frameworks (IPRFs), Asset Management and Business Continuity Plans
- increase Local Government participation in Local Emergency Management Committee activities and related education / communication programs
- quantify local, regional and statewide EM commitments and improve reporting within the IPRF.

For more information, visit the project web page:

www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/Emergency_Management_Planning_Project



**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 Web Sites

www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au
www.summerama.com.au
www.walkingcoastalsydney.com.au
www.monitor2manage.com.au



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SCCG PROJECTS UPDATE cont.

Sydney Harbour Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) Scoping Study

The project consultant has prepared the second iteration of the Literature Review Report, which is under review by the Project Team. The report now includes enhancements such as chapter summaries that can serve as standalone 'factsheets'.

Subsequent to the stakeholder workshop, stakeholder survey and literature review, the Scoping Study is well advanced. The consultant has synthesised the priority management issues pertaining to the Harbour. The report structure has been finalised and will draw upon local, national and international best practice and the relevant legislative and policy frameworks.

We expect the two reports to be reviewed by the project Advisory Committee early in the New Year and then to be launched publicly shortly thereafter. For more information on the project visit: <http://bit.ly/1kkeMf2>

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



Our new project manager, Fiona Shadbolt, began in late November to manage stage two of the program. She is developing a community of practice with the working group to develop best practice projects to improve landscape resilience to climate change. The Coastal

Biodiversity Literature, Data and Practice Review is now underway and will be complete in March.

An Expert Reference Group is also being formed. This group will provide specialist technical input, guide research, review prioritisation and evaluate projects under the devolved grants program. Group members will have expertise in Sydney's coastal ecosystems, ecological restoration, urban biodiversity and organisational capacity-building.

We are also developing the process for assessing project proposals for devolved grants. Funding will be available to fill research and policy gaps, provide key resources and undertake on-ground planting, weed control and rehabilitation of remnant coastal vegetation communities and key habitats across Sydney. These grants will be available in late January 2015. For more information, visit : <http://bit.ly/ZaiGgK>

MATTERS OF INTEREST

Summerama 2015

Throughout January, from Pittwater to Sutherland, you and your family can participate in fun and engaging activities. From sea kayaking, snorkelling and adventure boat tours to historical and geological walk 'n' talks, kids workshops and beach safety talks – there's something to suit all ages and interests in Summerama 2015.

Now in its 12th year, Summerama has been successfully connecting Councils and their communities to enhance awareness of the value of Sydney's coastline and the need to manage it sustainably. The Program is run by SCCG Member Councils, with the support of our sponsors Landcare Australia and Coastcare. Visit www.summerama.com.au or check out our Facebook page www.facebook.com/Summerama



MATTERS OF INTEREST cont.

23rd Annual NSW Coastal Conference

The 23rd Annual NSW Coastal Conference was held in Ulladulla from 11-14 November. The theme for this year's conference was 'Our coast ... a sustainable resource for everyone'.

The Conference has been held annually for the past 22 years and has grown to become one of the most successful coastal industry events in Australia. The annual conference attracts approximately 200 delegates who are interested in, or working within, the fields of coastal and estuary management research, education, service provision and policy. The three day event comprised 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.

A highlight was the attendance at the Conference dinner of the NSW Environment Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP. Over dinner the Minister announced Stage 2 of the Coastal Reforms now underway (see 'Coastal News' on p. 3 for details). The Minister also presented the Annual NSW Coastal Management Awards.

This year the SCCG was proud to sponsor the Conference Poster Prize. The winner was Wollongong Honours student Sarah Perry for her poster 'ICOLLS: The Influence of ENSO on Entrance Regime'. A People's Choice prize was also awarded to Ray Laine, Office of Environment and Heritage, for his poster 'Decision Support Supporting Informed Civic Participation in Coastal Management'.

Conference papers can be downloaded at <http://www.coastalconference.com/papers.asp>

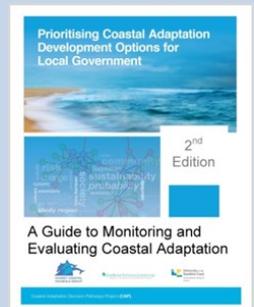
Launch of 'A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Coastal Adaptation' (2nd edition)

Earlier this year, we got together with our research partners from the University of the Sunshine Coast and five coastal councils (Bega Valley, Leichhardt, Rockdale, Sunshine Coast and Sutherland) to trial our 2012 publication *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Coastal Adaptation*. The trial sought to evaluate the use and utility of the Guide and the templates therein and identify opportunities to enhance it based on Councils' experience.

As an outcome of the trial and thanks to the contributions of the Councils that participated, we have developed a 2nd edition of the Guide, which is now available online at <http://bit.ly/1sxVeWu>

The Guide provides a framework for monitoring and evaluating the climate change adaptation strategies and practices of Local Government in coastal areas. Local Government is at the forefront of adaptation to climate change. As Councils continue to develop adaptation plans and related strategies, there is a need for guidance to promote consistency and best practice across the sector. Through projects such as this we hope to deliver the tools and support needed by Councils to achieve that.

For more information, visit http://www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/Projects/prioritising_coastal_adaptation



SUBMISSIONS, ADVOCACY, GRANTS AND AWARDS

Recent SCCG Submissions

Submission to Review of 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice – November 2014

We recently made a submission to the Review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice. The Review was announced less than two months after the introduction of the Code, in light of significant community concerns about its merit and implications. Concerns relate primarily to a lack of scientific basis for the Code, negative impacts on threatened species and ecological communities, inadequate consultation in development of the Code, a lack of distinction between urban and bush land areas, and monitoring and compliance issues. See Coastal News on p. 4 for further details on the Review, including recent changes announced by RFS.

Submission on Mining Exploration Licence Application – December 2014

Sydney Basin Pty Limited has applied for licences to explore for coal offshore NSW under the Commonwealth *Offshore Minerals Act 1994*. NSW Trade & Investment invited comment on the application to assist in deciding whether to grant or refuse the application, including any applicable licence conditions.

We do not support the granting of the licences sought for a number of reasons, including the absence of robust scientific information which identifies and assesses the actual and reasonably foreseeable environmental, socio-economic, cultural and health impacts of the proposed activities, including future cumulative impacts.

Copies of these submissions can be accessed on our website at: www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/submissions

Recent Awards

Recognising the effort of Member Councils, partner organisations and the Secretariat, the SCCG has received two awards:

Resilient Australia Awards 2014

NSW Winner (Local Government category)

National Winner (Local Government category)

Project: Coastal Vulnerability to Multiple Inundation Sources



These awards are an Australian Government initiative sponsored by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, in conjunction with States and Territories. They recognise innovative practices and achievements across the nation that make our communities safer, stronger, more resilient and better prepared to manage any emergency

situation.

2014 Climate Adaptation Champions Awards

Local Government category, highly commended

Project: Prioritising Coastal Adaptation Development Options for Local Government

These awards, conferred by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, recognise champions of practical and innovative ways to adapt to climate change.

Thanks are extended to Member Councils for their contributions to each project, which produced outcomes worthy of the awards conferred.

COASTAL NEWS

Stage 2 Coastal Reforms

On 13 November 2014, the NSW Environment Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, announced the commencement of Stage 2 of the NSW coastal reforms. The reforms have three key elements:

- replacing the current legislation with new coastal management legislation - a proposed new *Coastal Management Act*
- new arrangements to better support council decision making, including a decision support framework, a new coastal management manual and improved technical advice
- more sustainable arrangements for funding and financing coastal management.

The Minister also announced the completion of Stage 1 of the reforms, including the finalisation of the Planning Circular on coastal hazard notifications on s.149 planning certificates. The Circular provides Councils with guidance on disclosing coastal hazard information on planning certificates. A draft Circular was released for comment in early 2014 and we availed ourselves of that opportunity (see the submissions section of our website). The draft Circular was then updated, considering comments received.

The primary guidance is that where a relevant policy or development control relating to land arises due to a coastal hazard, notations to be included in a planning certificate should clearly identify the type of hazard(s), and for each hazard identified, classify whether that hazard is a current or future hazard. A copy of the Circular can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/1wEfv1S>



As part of the reform process, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) held coastal management workshops for Sydney Councils on 25 November and 10 December 2014 to:

- provide a brief further update on the progress of the stage 2 coastal reforms
- develop an understanding of what guidance is required by local government to prepare and implement coastal zone management plans
- identify the scope and components of that guidance.

We will continue to work collaboratively with OEH throughout the reform process and we will keep Member Councils engaged in any developments. For more information visit the OEH website: <http://bit.ly/J6LHVc>

Changes to NSW Planning system

The NSW Parliament has passed the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2014*. The new planning laws focus on improving enforcement processes and enabling the NSW ePlanning portal to be delivered. The Bill introduces:

- greater penalties against planning breaches
- enforcement powers that enable Councils to investigate illegal works
- powers to deliver the NSW Portal – ePlanning services across the state.

For more information on the Bill, visit: <http://bit.ly/1yXhkE4>

The NSW Government has also flagged further changes to speed up the State's planning system. They include clearer timelines for assessment processes, improving coordination between agencies, facilitating technical input to planning decisions and improved community engagement. Read more about the changes at: <http://bit.ly/1Bwz8pe>

COASTAL NEWS (cont.)

New Study on Sydney Marine Region

On 15 December 2014, the NSW Government announced the commencement of a study to assess the greater Sydney marine region. It will include a comprehensive assessment of the Hawkesbury Shelf bioregion, which extends from Newcastle to Wollongong and includes Sydney Harbour, Broken Bay, Botany Bay and Port Hacking.

The study will be overseen by the Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA) with input from the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel. According to the NSW Environment Minister, the study will inform decision making about the creation of an integrated marine protected area along the Sydney coastline by 2016. For more information visit: www.marine.nsw.gov.au

Marine Estate Management Act 2014 achieves assent



The *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* has passed both houses of Parliament and received formal assent on 11 November 2014.

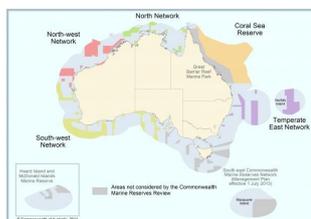
The objects of the new

Act are to provide for the management of the marine estate, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development; facilitate economic, social, cultural, scientific and environmental opportunities; promote the coordination of functions by public authorities; and provide for a comprehensive, strategically managed system of marine parks and aquatic reserves.

A key element of the legislation is the development of a Marine Estate Management Strategy, which will establish 'common principles and coordinated management while identifying priorities through a threat and risk assessment'. The Act also provides for the establishment of two statutory advisory bodies, the Marine Estate Management Authority and the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel, which have been operating on an administrative basis for the past year. The legislation will be jointly administered by the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for the Environment. For more information, visit: <http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au/key-initiatives/marine-legislation>

Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review

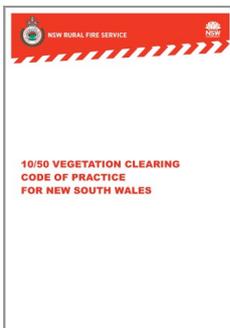
The Commonwealth Government has set aside a suite of recently developed management plans for Australia's marine reserves. The plans were due to come into effect in July 2014, but instead will be replaced by a new set of plans following a Marine Reserves Review recently commenced. The Government states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



Marine Reserves Map

Submissions are now being accepted on the review's scope and [terms of reference](#). Submissions close on **28 February 2015**. An online survey will also be available shortly. For more information visit: www.marinereservesreview.gov.au/join-the-conversation

Changes to rules on clearing in bushfire prone areas



Amidst a review into the controversial *10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice*, on 27 November 2014 the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) announced changes to the clearing entitlement area established under the Code, effective immediately. The entitlement area will be reduced to 100 metres for Category 1 and 30 metres for Category 2 Bush Fire Prone Land. The previous area was 350 metres and 150 metres respectively.

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 without seeking approval.

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 impacts upon threatened species and ecological communities, inadequate consultation, lack of distinction between urban and bush land areas, and monitoring and compliance issues. These concerns were synthesised in our recent [submission](#) to the review of the Code. Submissions to the review closed on 14 November 2014 and the results are now being considered by the RFS in partnership with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. For more information, visit: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing

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 was 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

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE SCCG TEAM



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