



Sydney Coastal Councils Group

Resilient Coasts. Engaged Communities. Local Leadership. Regional Impact.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN ACTION





Published 2017

Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc.

www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au

Document reference: 018-17GW

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An Introduction

This document provides a succinct overview of the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG), including an introduction to the SCCG, its history, strategic direction, examples of current key activities, and the value and benefits of membership based on the four SCCG Goals of: Collaboration, Capacity Building, Advocacy, and Research. This information will also assist in informing consultations with Member Councils over the coming months with the aim of reviewing the SCCG strategic direction, functions, scope, governance and resourcing, in light of changes within the Local Government sector and membership of the SCCG.

Guided by the [SCCG Strategic Plan 2015-2019](#), the SCCG is providing benefits to Councils across a range of coastal management issues including; climate change adaptation and resilience, coastal engineering, infrastructure and asset management, strategic and land use planning, biodiversity restoration and conservation, natural hazard and emergency management, monitoring and evaluation, and integrated water management.

The Strategic Plan provides clear direction to guide organisational activities, through the Group's Vision, Mission, Goals and the implementation of the 'Strategic Activities Program'. Three guiding principles encapsulate the core motivations of the Group and inform the implementation of the Strategic Plan:

Principle 1: Restore, protect and enhance the coastal environment, its associated ecosystems, ecological and physical processes and biodiversity.

Principle 2: Facilitate the sustainable use of coastal resources, now and in the future.

Principle 3: Promote adaptive, integrated and participatory management of the coast.

The SCCG was established as a Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) in 1989, and is a Well respected, industry leader in the areas of coastal and estuarine management, coordination and facilitation, demonstrating a prime example of regional local government collaboration in action. Originally established to address the discharge of primary treated sewage off Sydney's shoreline at North Head, Bondi, Malabar and Cronulla, resulting in the installation of the deep ocean outfalls, the SCCG quickly expanded membership and evolved from a single-issue to a broader movement for sustainable and integrated coastal management.

SCCG currently comprises eleven Member Councils representing nearly 1.5 million Sydneysiders, and collectively covers an area of around 800km² with a total oceanic and estuarine coastline of almost 600km, encompassing the waterways of Pittwater, Port Jackson, Port Hacking, Botany Bay, Middle and North Harbours, and the lower reaches of the Lane Cove, Georges and Cooks Rivers.

Twenty-eight years on, the SCCG is the peak ROC for sustainable coastal management and represents the majority of coastal residents in NSW. Our success leading sustainable coastal management is achieved by harnessing the individual and collective knowledge of our Member Councils, a suite of technical and academic experts and other coastal stakeholders. Accordingly, the SCCG is able to provide a unique service drawing upon the skills and knowledge of a range of practitioners in coastal management.



FIGURE 1: SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS MAP

The strength of the SCCG rests in engagement and shared expertise of the elected representatives, executive and technical staff of our Member Councils, and the capacity of our Secretariat to facilitate coordination, collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the Group and provide general and specialised expertise to implement the Strategic Plan.

Through the Strategic Plan, the SCCG delivers a range of services and programs that assist all Member Councils collectively and individually in the management of Sydney's urban coastal and estuarine environments. Through membership of the SCCG, Member Councils benefit from an increased capacity to implement a broad range of coastal and estuarine management initiatives.

Member Councils participate and collaborate in the SCCG, as an Incorporated Association, under the provisions of sections 355, 357 and 358 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. Our functions, powers and governance arrangements are described in our [Constitution](#), ratified by all Member Councils.

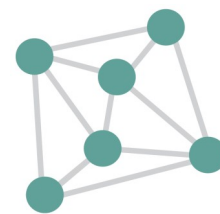
Representation by Member Councils is via three core committees, namely the Executive, Full Group and Technical Committees. These committees provide efficient and effective opportunities for Member Councils at all levels to regularly come together as a platform for coordination, collaboration, networking and peer-peer learning. The Full Group Committee provides for Councillors and staff to share information and direct the core activities of the SCCG. The Executive Committee consisting of up to 8 members are council delegates appointed at the SCCG Annual General Meeting providing regional representation, business operation oversight and decision making. The Technical Committee provides a regular forum for council professional staff to exchange information, collaborate on current and emerging needs and develop regional programs and projects.

The work of the SCCG and these three committees is facilitated by the Secretariat staff. Additional grant-based staff, as well as dedicated working groups and advisory committees are periodically established including external experts and stakeholders from state and federal government, academia and the community, to advance specific issues and projects on behalf of Member Councils.



GOAL 1: Collaboration

Facilitate cooperation between, and coordination of, actions by Member Councils and coastal stakeholders.



Overview

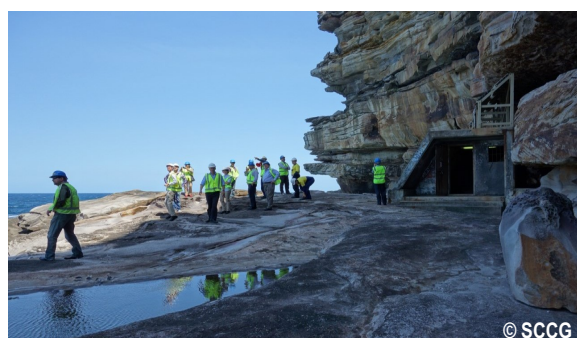
The SCCG provides an effective and efficient mechanism for Member Councils at all levels to drive regional collaboration and assist in ensuring regional consistency on issues of mutual interest. Working as a region the SCCG is also able to engage and collaborate with a range of key regional stakeholders including State government and its agencies, interest and advocacy groups, research organisations and the broader community.

Key Current Activities

- SCCG internal Committees (Full Group, Executive and Technical Committees).
- SCCG internal Working Groups (Sydney Salty Communities, Coastal Reforms, Beach Nourishment, Coastal Recreational Infrastructure, Summerama Champions).
- Representation on National, State and Local policy, management and research committees ensuring member council issues and needs are represented and addressed.
- Integrated water management—SCCG and Sydney Water MOU and shared data agreement, and the development of an Action Plan: Systems Management for Healthy Waterways, focusing on Regulatory and Funding Arrangements; System Performance – Sewer Network and Non-Compliant Connections; Information Transparency, Sharing and Effective Communication and Engagement.
- Waterway pollution response interagency collaboration and pollution protocols.
- Grey-headed Flying-fox Working Group and development of a regional management approach in partnership with OEH.
- Facilitating the annual SCCG Summerama community outreach program in collaboration with Member Councils and Summerama partners.

Benefits of Membership

- Strategic regional collaboration (through meetings, committees, forums, workshops)
- Peer support, peer-to-peer learning and mentoring
- Capture and sharing of knowledge and information
- Develop and delivery regional advocacy
- Interface of communication between Federal, State and Local Government, Academic and research Institutions and other stakeholders
- Resource sharing including innovation and best practice approaches
- Review and development of best practice policy and practice including emerging issues
- Access to substantial stakeholder networks and the coordination of information distribution and exchange between stakeholders
- Dedicated SCCG staff with high level facilitation, collaboration, and negotiation skills.



GOAL 2: Capacity Building



Develop and exchange knowledge and tools to support the role and build the capacity of Member Councils.

Overview

The SCCG builds Member Council capacity to sustainably manage the Sydney's coastal and estuarine areas through the provision of tools, documents and resources; partnership and grant-based programs; forums and professional development opportunities; and knowledge sharing through extensive networks.

Current Key Activities

- An online Emergency Management Health Check Tool and Resource Toolkit developed to assist Member Councils in self assessing capability in their planning, preparedness, resourcing and response to emergencies, hazards and risks, and in building a business case for state-based funding.
www.emhealthcheck.com.au
- Development of the Adapting Priority Coastal Recreational Infrastructure for Climate Change project in partnership with the National Committee on Coastal and Oceans Engineering (NCCOE).
- Embedding the SCCG Sydney Salty Communities program and project outputs and community of practice facilitation.
- Advancing the Connected Corridors for Biodiversity project outputs in partnership with SSROC.
- Maintaining and continuously building the SCCG network to ensure access to relevant decision makers, and technical, policy, academic experts.
- Facilitation and /or development of grant applications to address needs identified by Member Councils, and assisting and supporting grant applications by members and other stakeholders where appropriate, through the Grants Committee.
- Building on and embedding outcomes and deliverables including tools and resources from recent SCCG programs and projects.

Benefits of Membership

- Building Member Council individual and collective capacity to advance sustainable coastal and estuarine management;
- Securing and distributing substantial grant funding for local and regional programs;
- Facilitation of the SCCG Capacity Building Program providing access to seminars, forums, workshops and professional development activities as defined by Member Councils;
- Developing regional policy, practice, tools and resources;
- Interpretation and translation of scientific, legal, policy and other specialised information;
- An Information coastal knowledge hub and access to qualified and experienced policy and technical experts within the Secretariat;
- In-field learning via program case study presentations and on-site visits.



GOAL 3: Advocacy

Provide a regional and cohesive voice representing Member Councils.



Overview

The SCCG provides a significant vehicle for influencing Local, State and Federal policies and programs and ensuring ongoing recognition and support of the important role Member Councils play in the delivery of sustainable coastal management and planning. The active advocacy role improves the capacity of members to deliver a sustainable coastal environment.

Current Key Activities

- Significant regional submissions developed in 2017 include:
 - ⇒ [Land Management and Biodiversity Conservation Reforms](#) - June
 - ⇒ [NSW Marine Estate Threat and Risk Assessment Draft Report](#) - April
 - ⇒ [Draft District Plans and 'Towards Our Greater Sydney 2056](#) - March
 - ⇒ [Planning Legislation Updates](#) - March
 - ⇒ [Senate Inquiry into the Efficacy and Regulation of Shark Mitigation and Deterrent Measures](#) - February
 - ⇒ [Coastal Management Reforms Stage 2 – Coastal Management SEPP](#) – January
- Facilitation of dedicated advocacy working groups (e.g. Coastal reforms, Biodiversity reforms).
- Submission of successful motions to the ALGA National Assembly (June)
- Additional advocacy activities currently underway include: Review of State Environmental Planning Policies, ongoing NSW Coastal reforms including media activity, Crown lands Coastal framework review; green infrastructure approval pathways, marine plastics and single-use plastic bags, Federal government involvement and resourcing climate change adaptation.

Benefits of Membership

- Significant influence in the development and review of Government policy, legislation, activities and programs via a regionally representative and cohesive voice;
- Providing access to critical regional and state decision makers including Ministers and senior executives;
- Participation on key government and non-government committees representing the interest of members;
- Advocating on behalf of members through submissions, inquiries, correspondence, direct and indirect stakeholder consultations, and lobbying.
- Provision of qualified perspectives on regional coastal issues within the media and supporting member councils with their public representations;
- Substantial corporate and historical knowledge and clear contemporary understanding of regional and local issues and needs;
- Raising general community awareness of key SCCG activities and challenges through publicly available information including dedicated web sites, newsletters, media releases and other community forums.

GOAL 4: Research

Identify and address current and emerging regional coastal issues.



Overview

SCCG continually identifies and addresses current and emerging issues of relevance to member councils in alignment with priorities identified in the SCCG Strategic Plan. The SCCG is an award-winning facilitator of applied research assisting member councils with the complexities of contemporary and future coastal and estuary management policy and management practice. The SCCG enhances the research capacity of member councils and drives beneficial and co designed partnerships with a broad range of research institutions and key academics.

Key Current Activities

- Estimating Coastal Values using Multi-criteria and valuation methods (CSIRO partner project).
- Community Understanding of Coastal Erosion: Improving Resiliency and Preparedness to Coastal Storms and Sea Level Rise (UNSW partner project).
- Development of a Climate Ready Tool - Managing Coastal Ecological Communities in the Face of Rapid Change and Case Study development (CSIRO).
- Literature review and issues paper on sewer overflows management in the Sydney Region.
- Coastal Storms - Cost Analysis Pilot Study—providing a spreadsheet tool to councils (Risk Frontiers partner project).
- Sydney Salty Communities - Literature, Data and Practice Review.
- NCCARF CoastAdapt tool Implementation Partner as well as representation on NCCARF Advisory Groups.
- Mangrove and Saltmarsh Threat Analysis in the Sydney Coastal Councils Region (Macquarie and Wollongong Universities).
- Review of backyard native flora and fauna programs in the SCCG (Macquarie University).

Benefits of Membership

- Well established formal and informal partnerships with key research institutions;
- High level research knowledge and skill sets within the Secretariat, and maintenance and ongoing development of multidisciplinary networks of key experts available to advise and assist members;
- Proven track record of developing and facilitating applied research addressing identified needs of member councils and Sydney's coastal and estuarine environments;
- Regular and targeted interactions between researchers and policy makers;
- Representing Member Council research interests and needs on key national research bodies and advisory committees;
- Supporting and assisting members to integrate research outcomes into policy and management practices.



Moving Forward

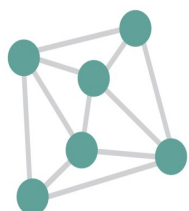
On establishment of the SCCG in 1989, Member Councils had significant concerns and management challenges with water quality, ecosystem degradation, infrastructure management and renewal, as well as ad-hoc attention and support from State and Federal governments. These issues driven by the ever-increasing population growth and urban development remain constant today.

As we look forward, Sydney's coastal environments including our estuarine and harbor areas, continue to face a range of natural and human pressures which are expected to intensify in the coming years. A growing coastal population brings with it increased development, demands on natural resources and existing infrastructure, increased waste and pollution, and changing pressures and demands on government by the community. Climate change impacts on coastal areas in the future is predicted to continue, with rising sea levels, extreme weather events and warming temperatures.

As a result of recent amalgamations and those remaining under challenge there is now an identified opportunity to undertake direct consultations and informative discussions with SCCG Member Council Delegates, Executives, Councillors and Administrators to consider the future scope, focus, services, resourcing, governance, and potential membership expansion of the SCCG.

Once the SCCG Annual Members survey and the above-mentioned consultations have been concluded and reviewed, the Secretariat will facilitate regional Member Council workshop(s) to further review the SCCG's strategic direction, governance, member services and resourcing. It is anticipated that these consultations will result in a revised business plan for formal consideration of members early in the new year, with adoption of the business plan in March 2018.

With 28 years of experience and knowledge, well developed tried and tested cooperation and collaboration mechanisms, the SCCG is well placed to meet existing and future challenges head on. A Collaborative response to change, new developments, challenges and opportunities is critical. Ongoing regional collaboration by Member Councils and SCCG working together, will be essential to ensure the continued sustainable management of our collective urban coastal and estuarine environments and council/community values.



Collaboration



Capacity Building



Advocacy



Research



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