

A SUBMISSION ON THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT COASTAL MANAGEMENT BILL 2015

To: Coastal Reforms Team, Office of Environment and Heritage

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This submission addresses the following items concerning the Stage 2 Reforms

Support for Beach Nourishment

Omissions in Emergency Plans

Concern about Hazard Lines

An omission in the Bill's Objects

An omission in the SEPP

Concern about Asset Management

Support for Beach Nourishment

The Stage 2 documents are encouraging in their repeated support for [beach nourishment](#) and [beach scraping](#) as “soft protection” measures to defend beaches. Examples of this from the documents include:

- “To adopt coastal management strategies that reduce exposure to coastal hazards, in the first instance and wherever possible, by restoring or enhancing natural defences including coastal dunes, vegetation...”
(Note: At Wooli, our DuneCare programme has been very successful over the last 5 years using sand trapping and replanting to reinforce and grow our dunes.)
- “Value is retained as the beach is maintained through sand nourishment”

There are two related areas in which the Stage 2 documents could be substantially improved:

1. Funding

The Manual states that “an LGA perspective can run the risk that relevant impacts on the local community may not be identified. Therefore, it is suggested that a socio-economic profile of the local community be undertaken to enable such impacts to be better understood by analysts.”

Recommendation: The Manual should require (not suggest) that a socio-economic profile of the local community be undertaken to enable funding impacts to be assessed.

Also, the Manual is limited to only reviewing existing funding options.

Recommendation: Incorporate broader funding ideas including :

- 1.1 the wide range of options used in similar situations overseas (eg bed tax, beach amenity tax; zero-interest mortgage loans)
- 1.2 Proposals in the Australian Productivity Commission's recent report into Disaster Funding. This recommends a major restructure of Australian Government funding for natural disasters. The recommendations include financial support to the states and territories for natural disaster relief and recovery be reduced while mitigation funding be increased to encourage governments to manage natural disaster risks more sustainably and equitably;
- 1.3 Funding natural disasters (fire, flood, erosion, etc) equally. The ABC recently reported this change of funding for bush fire management: “(Then) Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian said the government would abolish the emergency services levy, currently paid on insurance policies and replace it with a property levy which will be paid as part of council rates. The government believes this will spread out the cost of funding emergency services across all landowners across NSW.

2 Sourcing Sand for Beach Nourishment

“The availability and cost of sand to undertake nourishment” is referred to in the Manual. Sourcing sand for Wooli CZMP’s beach nourishment strategy was extensively investigated. A major outcome of this research was to uncover the very blinkered view and obstructive approach taken by some state agencies.

Recommendation: Consider adding to the role and skills of the Coastal Council to address this barrier. That is, the Coastal Council could include the skills to conciliate as an “honest broker” between government departments (Lands, Marine Parks, National Parks, Planning, OEH) and local councils to recommend to Ministers what the optimum solutions are for the state.

Omissions in Emergency Plans

The Stage 2 documents are encouraging in their frequent references to the need for and preparation of Emergency Plans. For example, from 4.3.1.5 of the Manual, “the coastal erosion emergency action sub-plan in the draft CMP should include council’s preparation responsibilities, triggers for emergency actions, a clear statement of how council will and will not respond (linked to the strategic direction for coastal management units) and how post emergency rehabilitation of coastal lands under council’s care and control will be managed.”

However, there are two omissions in the Emergency Planning documentation at Section 1.7 and Figure B3.2 which clearly need to be addressed:

1. Emergency actions to help protect private assets are not mentioned among the nine objectives for coastal vulnerability areas and
2. Giving a high priority to emergency actions is restricted to applying only to situations where there is a need to protect infrastructure.

Recommendation: Adjust Section 1.7 and Figure B3.2 to recognise that relatively small but prompt emergency actions (eg reshaping the fore-dune at Wooli before the next storm can impact the main dune) could provide a dramatic improvement in protection for all assets, both public and private. This would require councils to have pre-approved and pre-funded plans ready to action immediately an agreed trigger point is reached.

Concern about Hazard Lines

The use and method of Hazard Lines need improvement or replacement.

Improvement ? (Manual, section 21 part (c))

If hazard mapping, using hazard lines, is to remain what time horizon and what probability of projection will be used? When the State passed the responsibility for sea level rise (SLR) projections in hazard studies to coastal councils, councils could, and in a number of cases did, simply go their own, without scientific support. The magnitude of the uncertainties in global sea level rise projections many times exceeds the magnitude of local variations in sea levels. Thus there is no need for councils to depart from uniform SLR projections for NSW, in either quantum or horizon, unless they form the view that they have cases to justify, and gain OEH agreement to, minor local variations.

Recommendation: That the missing SLR coverage in the Toolkit include these parts:

- OEH’s uniform SLR projection advice to all NSW coastal councils.
- A consolidation of SLR research applicable to NSW. Based on this, councils will be able to consider whether they have cases to justify, and gain OEH agreement to, minor local variations.

This would retain the policy of councils having prime responsibility for arriving at hazard studies which take account of possible local variations, whilst giving the necessary control under the guidelines to exclude the past arbitrary and unscientific variations in the SLRs adopted. It would result in productivity gains at both State and Local Government levels, and importantly, councils would continue to be responsible to their communities for the ultimate SLRs used in hazard studies.

In the same vein, the horizon for studies relating to coastal dwellings should be the same, up and down the coast, to provide uniformity of perceived risk. If, for example, some councils were to move to a 50 year hazard study horizon, and others retain a 100 year horizon, the

relative exceedance lines would communicate entirely different perceptions of risk and property values on similar beaches. We look to such arbitrary and misleading comparisons being excluded under the relevant guideline.

Replacement ?

“The only justifiable continued use of conventional “hazard lines” is as a “first pass” for undeveloped coastal areas in order to determine the information required for a more informed assessment. Effective and credible coastal management should be based on a more sophisticated and defensible scientific platform that is also sensitive to social and economic considerations” (Gordon, 2015)

Recommendation: The Manual should openly use evidence-based assessments to decide the future of hazard lines not just accept them unquestioningly.

An Omission in the Bill’s Objects

The Missing Object (refer BILL, Part 1, Para 3)

This Bill has twelve objects to explain why it is needed and what it is intended to achieve. The objects identify ten actions (protect, promote, support etc.), impacting interested parties ranging from planners and the Aboriginal communities to the public and the Marine Estate Act.

However, the glaring omission is that there is no object specifically dealing with the promotion of fair and reasonable adaptation for existing coastal communities and their assets on the East Coast of NSW (except those in Sydney).

Recommendation Include this missing Object.

Which Assets? (refer BILL, Part 1, Para 3, Point (i))

Point (i) identifies the need to improve the resilience of coastal assets. However, it does not clarify which assets are to receive this attention.

Recommendation Adjust this point to state “public and private coastal assets”.

An Omission in the SEPP

The Missing Explanation.

The SEPP is intended to be an Explanation of Intended Effect (EIE). However, there is an obvious lack of explanation of the intended effects on coastal communities and property owners.

Recommendation: Include this missing document focussed on the positive and negative impacts on this group.

Recommendation: Use Plain English. Replace jargon with plain English eg “exceedance” to be replaced by “an X% likelihood of erosion reaching here in 50 years...”

Concern about Asset Management

Stage 2 generally, and the Coastal Manual in particular, deals extensively with **Risk Management** while it largely ignores **Asset Management**. This appears to relegate the approach to asset management to one of “fix it when it is broken and blame someone else”. In fact, the approach looks mostly focussed on Local government reform, with coastal reform relegated to being simply a sub-set of the local government delivery program.

Without real asset management we see a couple of major potential problems:

- Longer term (say 10 year) planning and budgeting are likely to be left out of coastal management programs and
- The reforms risk being undermined by a lack of leadership and cultural context.

Several parts of the Manual (eg Part B Section 5.3.2) do make reference to asset management concepts. However, there is a lack of reference to appropriate support/framework, in particular:

- There is no specific asset management expertise proposed for the Coastal Panel;
A panel member with asset management experience would recognise that the IPR (Integrated

Planning and Reporting) framework used by local government is totally inadequate for delivery of asset management for long lived assets ...and asset management programs, particularly those that feature “soft engineering” such as nourishment and beach scraping. The IPR framework is a very poor tool for managing any medium to long term council and private assets.

- There is no specific asset management framework recommended (refer **Note 1** below);

While the Manual generally attempts to address whole of community assets, sections such as 5.3.2 imply consideration of council assets (and remain largely silent on community assets). In fact, the coastal legislation reform is targeted at a context where the local authority is only one owner of assets, and a range of other (private) owners probably account for the greater value of assets (refer **Note 2**).

The benchmark Asset Management framework for most local authorities is the International Infrastructure Asset Management Manual (IIMM) and the Australian Infrastructure Financial Management Manual.

These documents are complimentary to each other, were published by the IPWEA (see Note 1) in later 2015 and are compliant with AS/ISO standards for asset management. Not only do these documents represent best practice (arguably world best practice), they represent the aspiration of most local government authorities, and display an intention entirely consistent with that of the new legislation. Note that this framework comprehensively covers relevant risk management currently discussed in the manual.

Recommendation:

- Include an Asset Management expert on the new coastal panel;
- Prepare a companion document to the IPWEA documents to tailor the underlying principles to scenarios addressed by the new legislation that include consideration of whole of community assets, not just local authority assets. Preparation of this companion document could be undertaken by the IPWEA with support from relevant community groups, and readily incorporated into the manual.

The result for the above will be consistent with legislation and local authority objectives.

Notes

1 *The benchmark Asset Management framework for most local authorities is:*

- *International Infrastructure Asset Management Manual (IIMM);*
- *Australian Infrastructure Financial Management Manual.*

These documents are complimentary to each other, were published by the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) in later 2015 and are compliant with AS/ISO standards for asset management. Not only do these documents represent best practice (arguably world best practice), they represent the aspiration of most local government authorities, and (again arguably) display an intent entirely consistent with that of the new legislation. Note that this framework comprehensively covers relevant risk management currently discussed in the manual.

2 *Optimising the success of the stage 2 Coastal Reforms will be partly dependent on the leadership and cultural context in which all stakeholders are engaged, and it is our contention that this aspect of the draft manual could be improved.*

In setting the context for this discussion, reference is made to the Quick Guide to the IIMM published late in 2015 by the IPWEA, which is aligned with ISO standards, and arguably represents best practice asset management. Clearly this manual (IIMM) has been written to facilitate best practice asset management in local authorities. Two key requirements to note for the purposes of this discussion are the need for:

1. *Customer engagement (Section 2.1);*
2. *Strong leadership and team engagement (Section 4.1).*

These needs are described (in the IIMM) in the context of local authorities providing outcomes to communities from their own resources.

The coastal legislation reform is targeted at a context where the local authority is only one owner of assets, and a range of other (private) owners probably account for the greater value of assets - so arguably the “customers” are now on the "same side of the fence” - albeit in a larger paddock as the local authority.

A key component of Section 4.1 (and the ISO standard) is leadership and establishment of an appropriate organisational context to facilitate success. We suggest this is much more challenging in the context of coastal legislation because:

- 1. The stakeholder group is much more diverse than the local authority alone;*
- 2. Local authorities are typically used to considering the other asset owners as*

customers (at best)

rather than fellow asset owners.

These challenges make it more imperative that the leadership and team context be established at the outset for the coastal legislation reform to be successful.

While the processes recommended by the IPWEA are generally applicable, the detail would need further development. For example, the coastal manual should have a revised equivalent IIMM Section 4.1 to establish a framework for leadership and team development in the coastal reform legislation context. It is quite possible that other elements of the IIMM, and its companion document AIFMM could also provide advantages to the coastal manual.