



NSW Coastal Council Meeting – summary minutes

28 February 2025

Meeting was held online.

Coastal Council members in attendance:

- Dr Philip Haines, Chair
- Mark Conlon
- Dr Elizabeth McEntyre
- Grahame Byron

Apology: None

Representatives from the Department Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and NSW Reconstruction Authority attended by video.

Following an Acknowledgement of Country, Coastal Council (the Council) members and guests were welcomed to the first meeting of the Council for 2025.

The main agenda items included updates from DCCEEW Director Marine Coast Estuary and Flood on the coastal program; a summary of Coastal Council activities since its last meeting in November 2024; and, two state agency presentations, one from DCCEEW Director Water Wetlands and Coastal Science on draft NSW Water Quality Objectives and a second from the NSW Reconstruction Authority A/Director Disaster Risk Management on the draft guidelines for Disaster Adaptation Plans.

Coastal Program Update (DCCEEW Marine Coast Estuary and Flood)

The update included information on: a departmental restructure in late 2024; progress on coastal management programs certification; new guidance on adaptation planning for coastal practitioners; and the Audit Office of NSW audit of the coastal management framework implementation.

Publication of the DCCEEW Strategic Plan (July 2024) and a subsequent departmental functional review saw a new organisational structure announced in December 2024. The new structure will, amongst other things, enhance collaboration and strategic capabilities for program delivery across the department's diverse portfolio. Responsibility for the marine, coast, estuary and flood program area are now primarily incorporated into the Regional Delivery Division of a new Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group.

Three coastal management programs (CMPs) have been certified since late 2024 - Bate Bay (Sutherland Shire), Bellingen Shire, and Clarence Valley Open Coast, bringing the total number of certified CMPs to 17. Further information on [certified CMPs](#) is available on the DCCEEW website.

In December 2024 DCCEEW published guidance '[Triggers and Threshold - Adaptation planning in Coastal Management Programs](#)' to assist local councils manage risks related to coastal hazards.

The guidance is for coastal managers and planners to help them prepare and develop considered strategies and responses to dynamic coastal management issues. DCCEEW is complementing the guidance with additional support in the form of presentations and workshops with councils.

The Audit Office of NSW routinely undertakes reviews of government programs. An audit of the coastal management framework forms part of the Audit Office's 2024-2025 work program and will assess whether the responsible agencies (DCCEEW and Department Planning Housing and Infrastructure) and select local councils are effectively implementing the coastal management framework which commenced in 2018. The audit is currently underway and publication of its findings and recommendations will be delivered as part of the Audit Office's 2024-2025 work

Coastal Council Update (Coastal Council Chair)

Council provided its final advice and recommendations to government and the Minister on tasks completed under its 2024 work plan. The work plan included requests for advice on: coastal vulnerability area mapping; managing risks from coastal hazards; enhancing cultural safety and collaborative partnerships with First Nations people; the NSW coastal management manual; and, monitoring, evaluation and reporting programs in Coastal Management Programs.

A meeting was held with Minister Sharpe to discuss the advice, and matters likely to warrant further research and advice in 2025. The Minister acknowledged the Council's engagement with local government and other stakeholders in the preparation of the advice.

The Chair acknowledged the contribution of all members to the Council's advice and stakeholder engagement in 2024, and the ongoing support of DCCEEW senior staff and Council secretariat. It is anticipated 2025 will see a similar level of engagement with coastal practitioners and stakeholders as part of the Council fulfilling its responsibility to provide providing informed independent advice to the Minister.

Agency Presentations (DCCEEW and NSW Reconstruction Authority)

NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) – Disaster Adaptation Plans and guidelines

Regional Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAP) are intended to better coordinate agency collaboration, funding, capacity and capability to reduce the cost and impacts of all natural hazards. The NSW Reconstruction Authority legislation, links between DAPs and key state strategies (e.g. NSW Climate Change Strategy; State Disaster Mitigation Plan; land use and infrastructure planning; state emergency management plans) and programs (coastal management programs and floodplain management plans) were summarised.

The development of the new DAP guidelines, to be published in 2025, have been informed by DAPs in preparation for the Northern Rivers and Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. The presentation set out how RA is working closely with state agencies, local government, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other key stakeholders to develop DAP guidance which reflects feedback received for improved coordination of state and local government emergency response and mitigation, particularly after major floods in the northern rivers in 2022.

DCCEEW Water Wetlands and Coastal Science – draft NSW Water Quality Objectives scope and consultation

The NSW Water Quality Objectives (WQO) Review, a Marine Estate Management Strategy initiative (*MEMS Initiative 1A: To improve water quality and reduce marine litter for the benefit of marine habitats, wildlife and community*), seeks to update WQO last set in 1999. The scope of the current review is to: research contemporary community values and uses and assign WQO to coastal catchments in NSW; update guideline values for aquatic ecosystems; and, revise WQO definitions and icons. Out of scope are River Flow Objectives which are covered by Water Sharing Plans.

Community engagement on the draft WQO is expected to occur during 2025.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Coastal Council is to scheduled for 16 May 2025.