

AUSTRALIAN COASTAL SOCIETY: POLICY STATEMENT 2011 NSW ELECTION

1. **The ACS recognises that NSW since 1997 has introduced a wide array of legislation, policy statements and guidelines related to coastal planning and management.** Appropriately, they were built on the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development incorporated in the NSW Coastal Policy 1997, amendments in 1998 to the *Coastal Protection Act 1979*, and in other NSW legislation. These and other initiatives received bipartisan support and were underpinned by advice to the State Government and local councils from the NSW Coastal Council.
2. **Since 2004, actions of Government have reduced the State's capacity to manage the coast in a coordinated and sustainable way.** Such actions include further division of coastal management responsibilities between and within agencies often with manifest differences in approaches as to how the NSW coast should be managed. **There is little attempt at coordination as existed prior to 2004 through the operation of the NSW Coastal Council.** Engagement with local government and communities in decision making has declined. Independent coordinated **coastal advice to Government** has NOT been forthcoming from the Natural Resources Council or the Natural Resources Advisory Council. These entities have not appreciated the economic, legal and social dimensions of coastal planning and management let alone how best to achieve good **coastal** environmental outcomes. Furthermore they have not served as an entity to which the community, local government or business could turn to for assistance and advice, a role undertaken by the Coastal Council.
3. Debate on amendments to the *Coastal Protection and Other Legislation Bill 2010* highlighted divisions in Parliament, in agencies of government, business and community groups on how built and natural assets in coastal NSW should be managed. Twin pressures of continued coastal population growth and threats arising from climate change require appreciation of conflicting interests from different stakeholders. To reconcile these interests, and promote regional development and consultation, **ACS recommends** the next NSW Government in reviewing how the built and natural assets of the State can be best improved and maintained should:
 - (1) **Adopt a regional model** for integrating strategic land use planning and coastal management, involving either an expansion of the existing functions of Catchment Management Authorities, or providing more statutory powers to regional planning entities. These regional bodies could be responsible for linking Local Environment Plans with Catchment Action Plans, Coastal Zone Management Plans and infrastructure plans consistent with overarching State coastal policy;
 - (2) **Establish an independent advisory body** to maintain an overview of NSW coastal planning and management issues. This may be achieved through EITHER an expansion of the role of the recently constituted Coastal Panel into a **Coastal Council** to include regional and technical representation; OR an expansion of the jurisdiction of the **Natural Resources Commission** to include actions of state agencies and local councils, with a dedicated Coastal Commissioner, operating under provisions of both the NRC Act 2003 and the Coastal Protection Act 1979, to ensure effective coordination and compliance with State coastal policies;
 - (3) **Ensure climate change is given specific weight** in the objects and details of any reformed land use planning legislation; and
 - (4) **Organise state agencies** for more effective development and implementation of coastal planning and management through coordinated action by CEOs of agencies responsible for coastal planning and management. All agencies should collectively seek to achieve sustainable economic growth, protection of high value environmental assets such as beaches, estuaries and wetlands, and managing the risks of extreme weather events and climate change to coastal natural and built assets.

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