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MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN COASTAL SOCIETY (NSW Chapter):

MINISTER'S COASTAL ANNOUNCEMENTS WELCOMED

Announcements by NSW Minister for the Environment Mr Rob Stokes last night (Thursday 13 Nov) at the 23rd NSW Coastal Conference, in Ulladulla on the NSW south coast, have been welcomed by the Australian Coastal Society (NSW) as an 'historic breakthrough' in NSW coastal management.

Mr Stokes announced that, as Stage 2 of its 'coastal reforms', the Baird Government intends to

- introduce a new Coastal Management Act to replace the 34 year old Coastal Protection Act,
- re-establish the NSW Coastal Council as a 'key source of independent advice' for relevant ministers, state agencies and local councils charged with managing the coastal zone; and
- release an updated Coastal Zone Management Manual, which will integrate estuary planning, plans for managing the open coast and beaches, with other council statutory plans.

"These initiatives are very much in line with international best practice, and indicate to the NSW coastal management community, that the Minister and the Baird government are serious about working with councils and communities in managing their precious coastal resources in the public interest," said Mr John Corkill, a spokesperson for the Australian Coastal Society (NSW Branch).

Mr Corkill said that Mr Stokes' key-note address was a highlight of the conference since it was the first time a Minister for the Environment had made such an address since the NSW Coastal Conference began 23 years ago. He said that the minister's speech, which acknowledged many delegates' frustration with the government's lack of direction on further coastal reforms, was warmly applauded by conference delegates and had 'set the room buzzing with excitement'.

Mr Stokes urged local councils to finalise their Coastal Zone Management Plans as soon as possible and submit them to him for certification, at the latest, by the end of the financial year. He advised delegates that the Government wanted councils to 'move forward' with the coastal planning rather than 'go back and start again', noting that all future funding of coastal projects would need to be consistent with the plans agreed by councils and their communities and certified by government.

"This is very good news because it reinforces the importance of Coastal Zone Management Plans as the appropriate framework for making key decisions on coastal management and for allocating resources for their implementation," said Mr Corkill.

Mr Stokes advised that Stage 1 of the government 'coastal reforms' was now complete with the release of a Planning Circular to councils providing guidance on the issuing of s 149 certificates. Section 149 certificates are issued by councils to prospective landowners to advise them of policies and current or future coastal hazards applying to individual properties.

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