



ACS

Australian Coastal Society Ltd

PO Box 1984, Bondi Junction NSW 1355

18 May 15

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Coastal Society (ACS) in relation to the Inquiry by the Standing Committee into the Register of Environmental Organisations. We welcome this opportunity to make a submission.

The ACS was established in 2008 as a company limited by guarantee. It is a non-profit organisation listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations. The ACS represents the combined knowledge and interests of leading scientists, the legal profession, elected representatives, coastal managers, the private sector and industry professionals, government, academia and members of the coastal community across Australia. The prime reason for its formation was that at successive national Coast to Coast Conferences, supported by the Australian Government since 1994, the need for collective action was highlighted to bring together various coastal management interests that had no on-going national voice. This issue had been identified in reports of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment going back to 1980 (also 1991 and 2009) and the Resource Assessment Committee Inquiry of 1993.

At the 2004 Coast to Coast Conference in Hobart, the need for a national coastal champion, external to governments, was discussed. The absence of a mechanism for communicating concerns and information of diverse coastal interest groups in a structured way was recognised at this time. The following 2006 Conference in Melbourne mapped out the structure and function of ACS, and at the Darwin Conference in 2008 the Society was formally inaugurated complete with constitution and office bearers. State branches of ACS have subsequently been formed.

The ACS is a broad-based, pragmatic, organisation with a desire to pursue means that further the goal of a better coastal environment. The mission of the ACS is to be *“A voice for the Australian Coast dedicated to healthy ecosystems, vibrant communities and sustainable use of resources”*. Key objectives are:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the environmental, social and economic value of the Australian coast;
- Provide a forum for exchange of ideas and knowledge among people involved in management, planning and development of the Australian coast;

- Contribute to international, national, state and local discussions on coastal issues;
- Improve the understanding of the value of the coast to ensure the use of ecologically sustainable development practices;
- Encourage the conservation of sites of environmental and cultural significance on the coast and in coastal waters;
- Facilitate an increase in knowledge and skills of people working in coastal industries, management, planning and development about the coast;
- Support national, state and local coastal conferences in order to advance these objects.

The ACS has established a web site that assists in the promotion of these objectives (www.australiancoastalsociety.org).

Since 2008, the ACS has been active in bringing together the many different interests that seek to use and enjoy coastal resources. Members have contributed to exchange of information on coastal management, planning, engineering, environmental protection and policy. In particular, we have been active in various ways in promoting the link between economic outcomes and the maintenance of environmental assets such as Australia's over 10,000 beaches and its vast coastal and marine ecosystem services, and at risk built assets. This has included a presentation and submission in 2014 to the Productivity Commission on Natural Disaster Funding.

Australia's 35000km of coast excluding islands contributes an estimated total of \$USD 316,184,910 per year out of the total global ecosystem services estimated as \$USD 125 trillion per year (in \$2007). This places us as one of the most important countries on Earth in value of such services to global welfare.

Beaches are a strong source of attraction to both residents and tourists alike, with over 50% of residential addresses in Australia located within 7km of the shoreline. The Sydney Coastal Councils Group and the University of New South Wales [estimated](#) that visits to Sydney beaches were associated with \$260 million in direct travel expenditure and around \$220 million in retail expenditure. The project also estimated that the desire to live near the beach added over \$110 million to property values in Collaroy-Narrabeen. This attraction is not without its challenges. Coastal properties at risk from erosion or flooding over the next century in NSW were valued at \$1 billion in 2005. This figure increases yearly due to property value increases and intensified coastal development. There is an obvious need to minimise risk in future as population continues to grow around the Australian coast to reduce the burden of post-disaster recovery funding.

Natural features of the Australian coastline are a huge drawcard for tourists, and a significant source of employment and revenue for the regional, state and national economies. Deloitte Access Economics in 2013¹ estimated that the natural features of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area contributed over \$7billion in direct expenditure each year to the local, regional and broader economies, and was responsible for employment of 68,978 full-time equivalent positions. Of this, \$5.4 billion was attributed to tourism and recreation, which employed over 67,000 people.

The ACS seeks to bring together the best available information in the many fields of research and policy development relevant to the management of the coastal zone to ensure that decisions that impact upon the coastal zone are evidence-based and adaptive in nature. The ACS works always to show that assets such as these are managed with a view to maintaining both their ecological integrity and their economic value. We strongly support the concept of building the so-called "saltwater economies" of cities and regions, and to make them more resilient to the inevitable

¹ Deloitte Access Economics 2013, Economic contribution of the Great Barrier Reef, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Townsville

natural shocks that will hit them in the future. In these ways, the ACS plays and seeks to continue to play an important, non-partisan role in promoting awareness of the value of these national natural and built assets.

We appreciate any opportunity to meet with the Standing Committee to expand on the role of the ACS and to justify its inclusion in the Register of Environmental Organisations.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom FitzGerald', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom FitzGerald
Secretary, Australian Coastal Society Ltd.