



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT

NSW Coastal Council 2020 Work Program

Implementation of the NSW Coastal Management Framework
An annual survey of coastal managers and practitioners



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Summary

The purpose of the Coastal Council's 2020 survey of coastal managers and practitioners is to review the implementation of the Coastal Management Framework and identify matters of concern for local councils in the development of their Coastal Management Programs (CMPs). The survey builds on annual surveys undertaken by the Coastal Council in 2018 and 2019.

The 2020 survey, conducted entirely online from 12 October 2020 to 30 October 2020, was distributed to 276 individuals from local, state and federal government, industry and research organisations. All local councils in the coastal zone received the survey, and those contacted were encouraged to pass the survey on to others in their professional networks. A total of 93 responses was received and included a representative sample of coastal practitioners from local and state government. A majority of the respondents (71 per cent) answered at least one framework implementation question, an increase in the response rate of around 9 per cent compared to the 2019 survey.

Many of the Coastal Management Framework (the framework) implementation issues raised in previous surveys are repeated in the 2020 survey, albeit with some minor changes in numbers of certified CMPs, CMPs underway and ranking of issues.

Implementing the Coastal Management Framework – Coastal Management Program status and progress

Status

- Two CMPs (Stockton and Lake Illawarra) have been certified, the first under the new framework and one (Lake Illawarra) as a multi council (Wollongong and Shellharbour) CMP.
- The number of councils involved in preparing a CMP (or CMPs) has increased from 46 to 52 since 2019, primarily due to the inclusion of more Sydney councils in the Greater Sydney Harbour CMP.
- Multi-council CMPs that aim to integrate catchment and coast management are under development for many large metropolitan and regional estuaries (e.g., Richmond River, Hunter River, Lake Macquarie, Hawkesbury-Nepean River, Greater Sydney Harbour, Cooks River). In comparison, there are few multi-council open coast CMPs (Eastern Sydney).
- Grants for CMP planning declined to \$0.3 million in 2019–20 from a peak of \$1.67 million in 2017–18. It is expected grants for the current financial year (2020-21) will likely exceed recent years, given changes to the grant guidelines introduced in 2020 and the growing number of councils preparing CMPs.

Progress

- There are 47 CMPs being prepared for three distinct geographic scopes – Open Ocean Coast, Estuary, or a combination of Open Coast and Estuary. In some instances, councils (e.g. Tweed and Shoalhaven Councils) have decided to prepare a number of separate CMPs for their estuaries and open coast. In contrast, others have sought to combine estuary and coasts into a single CMP (e.g. Port Macquarie Hastings and Newcastle City councils).

- Multiple council CMPs are most common for the large estuaries in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area. Only three multi-council CMPs are reported outside of metropolitan Sydney for the Hunter and Richmond River estuaries and Lake Illawarra.
- Many CMPs (n=24) have completed their scoping stage (Stage 1), and of these, over half (n=16) have stages (Stage 2–4) underway. Some CMPs have no reported status (i.e. Richmond River, Northern Beaches Council, Eurobodalla) or have stages incomplete as councils look to combine draft individual CMPs into a single LGA-wide CMP (i.e. Bega).
- In terms of delivery date, around half (n=25) are estimated to be complete by December 2021. This may be optimistic given few have been certified and, in some instances, council's estimated 2020 certification date has passed. Approximately a third (n=11) of the CMPs have a nominated delivery date between 2022 and 2025.
- Coastal Vulnerability Area (CVA) maps are anticipated for 13 of the CMPs listed. Some, such as Newcastle City Council, state they will not be preparing CVA maps for its two CMPs, one of which is the certified Stockton CMP.

Implementing the Coastal Management Framework – key issues

Many of the framework implementation issues raised in previous surveys are repeated in the 2020 survey. Key issues highlighted in 2020 to be addressed to improve framework implementation include:

- **Improved and consistent guidance to local councils** on the preparation of their CMPs:
 - state government to consider revisions of the Coastal Manual to make it easier to apply for estuarine and open coast CMPs and include information on how catchment issues can be included in a CMP
 - an update of the manual includes improved step-by-step guides, possibly with assessment templates, detailing the requirements for each CMP stage and including best practice CMP examples. Updates should also identify what formal governance structures are appropriate to work across council administrative boundaries to manage coastal issues and how to effectively integrate CMP and Marine Estate Management Strategy actions
 - expand the amount of technical guidance, either in the Manual or Toolkit, on a range of matters such as what sea level rise projections to use in the absence of mandated benchmarks, hazard assessment under coastal erosion, recession and inundation, risk assessment and options evaluation, and application of economic analysis/cost–benefit analysis
 - improved guidance on the preparation of coastal management area maps, principally for CVAs but also for coastal wetlands in highly urbanised and modified catchments
 - communication of the scope and metrics for CMP performance audits.
- **Improved state and local government partnering on CMPs** through effective governance and oversight of CMPs, be it for multi-council estuary CMPs or CMPs for sites of significant coastal hazard, by:
 - ensuring government agencies have a good understanding of their organisational and performance role in CMPs and their priorities and resourcing reflect this. National Parks and Wildlife Service and Crown Lands are commonly identified as key agencies to engage in this respect

- better integration of catchment, coast and marine policy and governance across state and local government
- promote communication and collaboration between state and local government across a number of organisational levels to highlight the benefits of preparing and implementing a CMP
- involve and consult with local government in any review of the framework.
- **Capacity building for local government** to support CMP preparation and delivery by December 2021 by:
 - conduct of Department-led council meetings/workshops on CMP preparation to network and build skills for developing CMPs by taking a more 'learning together' approach
 - facilitation of better access to agency technical specialists/scientists and data to assist with understanding and applying government produced information in a CMP
 - providing specific support and resources for councils transitioning CZMPs to CMP by December 2021 as well as dedicated support for coordination and governance of large multi council CMPs
 - commencing regular (quarterly) reporting of CMP status and delivery on the Department's web pages.
- **Prioritising action by state government to clear known regulatory hurdles** for current Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMP) and future CMPs for:
 - oversight of coordinated management and action at sites of significant open coastal hazard for both the open coast and estuaries
 - urgent attention to the emergency management provisions, including roles and responsibilities of various agencies and updating of the Coastal Protection Services Charge 2010 guidelines
 - guidance in relation to land status around ambulatory boundaries for all stakeholders in relation to boundaries between private and coastal land, and agreed means for identifying this boundary in all circumstances
 - streamlining the pathways for CVA map preparation and making.

An update to the format and approach to annual surveys

Coastal Council's annual surveys continue to monitor CMP progress and provide insight into the framework's implementation. However, after three years, it is timely to review the current approach and consider how future surveys are conducted to examine the causes and suggest potential solutions to the impediments and issues that are consistently raised by the local government. Apart from including additional questions, future surveys could include other methods such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews to gain better insights into the issues and expectations. Future annual surveys will rely on the Department's information gathering and routine public reporting of progress on the framework implementation, particularly information on the status of the preparation and certification of CMPs.

A better understanding of the issues and identifying solutions, communicating successes through good practice case studies, and building a new level of collaboration between local and state government are all necessary for the sustainable long-term management of our coast. An updated approach to the scope and conduct of future surveys is also necessary to match this aspiration and better support local and state governments with the Coastal Management Framework's implementation.