

DR22/002 NSW COASTAL CONFERENCE 2022

S017-T00013

Responsible Officer: David Grace - Councillor

Attachments: Nil

Community Goal: 5 Our engaged community with progressive leadership

Community Strategy: 5.2 Proactive, responsive and strategic leadership

Delivery Program Link: 5.2.2 Implement effective governance and long-term planning

Operational Plan Link: 5.2.2.1 Assist the Council in meeting its statutory obligations and roles

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Councillor David Grace represented Eurobodalla Shire Council at the 2022 NSW Coastal Conference, which was held on 31 May to 2 June 2022 in Kingscliff, and he presents his Delegate's Report on the conference.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

1. The Delegate's Report from Councillor David Grace on the 2022 NSW Coastal Conference be received and noted.
2. A councillor briefing be held on the environmental education and management programs that Council conducts, and particularly the areas where citizen science is utilised or could be further enhanced.

BACKGROUND

The 29th NSW Coastal Conference (the conference) was held in Kingscliff, NSW from 31 May to 2 June 2022. The key theme of the conference this year was 'Living with uncertainty'. This theme reflects the reality that as the effects of climate change become more obvious, our coastal areas are increasingly vulnerable. This requires us to work in an atmosphere of change and uncertainty in the management of our coastal areas. While this theme was consistent throughout the conference, a recurrent sub-theme was observed on the value and prevalence of citizen science initiatives.

The conference provided a valuable forum for discussion of coastal management and the preservation of our coastal areas, and a unique opportunity to meet staff and councillors from other local government areas, academics and industry experts.

Over 80 presentations were given at the conference. This report will focus on:

1. the keynote speakers who opened and closed the conference; these presentations most heavily focused on the conference theme
2. those presentations which provided particularly inspiring, relevant, or topical overviews of works, experiences, or initiatives in the area of coastal management and community engagement
3. those presentations in which Eurobodalla Shire Council was directly referenced.

Noteworthy topics raised in the presentations included:

- collaborative citizen science initiatives
- resilience in the wake of the 2019 bushfires
- recognising and incorporating First Nations' knowledge into coastal planning
- engaging the Aboriginal community meaningfully in consultation and,
- addressing coastal hazard challenges.

The conference was opened with an acknowledgement of Country, followed by an opening by the Honorable Wendy Tuckerman, Minister for Local Government.

All presentations can be viewed in PDF format using the following link (password is CSTCONF123): <https://www.coastalconference.com/project/papers-and-presentations/>

Keynote

The first keynote speaker for the conference was a representative from Core Logic, a large data analytics firm, and the focus of the talk was on climate and risk management in coastal planning.

The key point is that banks and insurance firms are paying close attention to the influences of coastal hazards on property and insurance, and they have significant progress to make in relation to sourcing accurate data and forming working relationships with the scientific and engineering subject matter experts on all matters coastal.

The final keynote speaker was a youth activist with a strong focus on climate change, environmental protection, and gave a powerful message of hope in the face of uncertainty from the viewpoint of a young person growing up in a time of heightened climate change awareness.

This presentation acknowledged the recent flooding which had devastated the area around Kingscliff, including the settlements of Byron Bay, Murwillimbah and Tweed, and warned of the consequences of inactivity for future generations.

Inspiring, relevant or topical presentations on citizen science initiatives:

- *Caring for water places – Kate Coorey*

This presentation focused on teaching the local Awakrwal community and others about caring for creeks, rivers, and estuaries in the Byron local government area.

The community was trained in the use of practical skills such as using water meters, educated on riparian regeneration processes, and then putting into practice, scientific understanding and skills.

- *Building capacity in communities to adapt to a changing distribution of migratory wildlife - Susan Crocetti*

This presentation looked at how collaboration between citizen scientists and paid workers has assisted in tracking and making decisions about marine wildlife such as whales, sharks, and turtles. The citizen science 'Right Whale ID' program was a success story of training and involving community in meaningful scientific programs.

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- *Effective engagement with Indigenous communities for coastal country – Neil Dufty*

This presentation discussed the involvement of the Aboriginal community in a Coastal Management Program and the unique challenges associated with meaningful, safe, and respectful engagement.

- *A citizen science-based assessment of marine species redistributions in NSW – Troy Gaston*

This presentation highlighted the benefits of citizen science initiatives in delivering high volume, 'crowd source' data with tangible benefits to ecological science. The 'Red Map' smart phone app has been invaluable in allowing everyday citizens to log sightings of various marine species allowing tracking of distributions. The success of the program has provided the basis for strong recommendations in a nationwide report card for wider citizen science initiatives to be taken up.

- *Friends of Cabbage Tree Bay – Robynne Millward*

This short presentation was given by a member of a local volunteer group operating in Sydney's Northern Beaches and promoted the benefits of community groups and citizen science initiatives partnered with local government and non-government organisations.

- *Empowering the tourism community to own it and act on visitor litter – Julpiette Myers*

This presentation demonstrated the merits in collaboration between tourism operators and the community in reducing litter and plastic waste, and introduced 'Ground Swell', a follow-up initiative of Take 3 for the Sea.

Presentations in which Eurobodalla Shire Council was referenced:

- *Engaging First Nations people on Coastal Management Programs – Andrew Williams and Emma Maratea*

This presentation used Eurobodalla Shire Council as one of two case studies for the targeted engagement of the Aboriginal community within Coastal Management Programs (CMPs), an area where guidance is still lacking at the State level.

Praise was given to Eurobodalla Shire Council for their strong initiative in engaging the Aboriginal community respectfully, uniquely and successfully throughout their Open Coast CMP.

- *Where there's a 'WILS' there's a way: Wagonga Living Shoreline – Jillian Keating*

The Wagonga Inlet 'Living Shoreline' (WILS) Project underway in Narooma was the subject of the presentation, which was co-authored by Council staff member, Heidi Thomson. The presentation gave an overview of the benefits and success of the WILS.

Once again Council staff were praised for how effective collaboration, community engagement and cultural values have shaped the project.

- *Managing coastal waterways after the 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfires in south-east NSW - Cherie Parmenter*

Around 47 catchments in the south-east region of NSW were bushfire-affected in the 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfires.

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Eurobodalla Shire, Shoalhaven City and Bega Valley Shire Council coordinated on a response in the aftermath of the bushfires through a NSW Government grant.

This presentation gave an overview of the impacts of the fires, lessons learned through remediation and how the overall health and resilience of the catchments is two years on.

Council staff, Deborah Lenson and Heidi Thomson, co-authored the presentation.

CONCLUSION

The conference provided an opportunity to hear from experts on how the most recent research and coastal planning initiatives are being applied across NSW.

A strong emphasis was placed on the benefits of citizen science initiatives, First Nations' engagement, and educating communities in order to build resilience in the face of change.

Eurobodalla was recognised for our good work in multiple presentations, and we should celebrate this recognition, especially considering our status as one of the smaller, regional coastal councils.

My observations from the conference are that we are doing well in this time of uncertainty in the management of our coast, which is a vital element of our economy. We have some innovative citizen science projects which are assisting in building observations, data, and evidence we can use to navigate our responses to our rapidly changing environment.

We cannot stand still in a rapidly changing environment, and we need to make use of all the resources, including knowledge, available to us. We need to continue to make it easy for the council and residents to work together to maintain the land which sustains us and all other living creatures, and we need to build further on our achievements so far.

Since returning from the conference I have had the opportunity to meet and discuss the conference with the Director Planning and Sustainability, Lindsay Usher, Divisional Manager Environmental Services, Deb Lenson, and Coastal and Flood Management Planner, Cameron Whiting, which has highlighted that those projects recognised at the conference only represent a portion of our citizen science initiatives and work in coastal management. This was further highlighted in the response to my Councillor Request which was responded to via the Councillor Newsletter.

Our Council needs to make sure that both residents and visitors are aware of our efforts, and I am recommending that we regularly highlight and celebrate our community science efforts in our communications.

A councillor briefing is recommended on the environmental education and management programs that Council conducts, and particularly the areas where citizen science is utilised or could be further enhanced.