

South Coast Regional Sea Level Rise Policy and Planning Framework

Reasons for this Study

The NSW Government withdrew its sea-level rise policy in 2012. Local councils were advised to individually determine allowances for future sea level rise considering local conditions. These allowances will underpin local land use planning, infrastructure and development decisions. Eurobodalla Shire Council and Shoalhaven City Council jointly engaged expert coastal consultants to review legal opinions, state government advice and the latest science in a local context and to advise appropriate sea level allowances for use in a coastal planning framework. The review was undertaken by **Whitehead & Associates** together with **Coastal Environment** and funded by the Councils and the NSW Government Coastal Management Program.



Batemans Bay CBD

Key Legal and Planning Findings

- Sea-level rise has been **recognised and planned** for in New South Wales for **25 years**.
- Councils should continue to plan for sea-level rise.
- Councils should continue to assume that **climate change is real** and impacts will become more pronounced with time.
- Councils should care for the **wellbeing of both present and future generations**.
- Councils should take a **cautious approach** when there is uncertainty
- Councils should prepare a **management strategy** aimed at **reducing** the risks associated with sea-level rise.
- Decisions made by Council should be **clear and transparent**.
- State guidelines instruct councils to “consider adopting **projections** that are **widely accepted** by **competent scientific opinion**”.

Key Scientific Findings

- There is no compelling reason to not adopt the **projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** as the most **widely accepted and competent** information presently available.
- Recent sea level rise trends offshore of New South Wales are similar to the global average.
- Recent changes in sea level have been very similar between Sydney and the Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla coasts.
- Future NSW sea-level rise will likely be similar to the global average, with only minor variation.

Recommendations

Expected regional sea level variations are at a global rather than local scale. Variable sea-level rise allowances between Sydney and the Eurobodalla coast are not justified.

The IPCC has recently published four new sea-level rise projections. These are very similar until 2050 but diverge beyond 2050. The RCP 8.5 projection assumes that world economic growth will continue with an ongoing heavy reliance on fossil fuels as the primary source of energy. It provides a defensible, cautious approach that also tries to minimise risk for future generations.

There remains uncertainty in the timing of long term sea level rise, so we need to continue to monitor advances in scientific understanding and adjust planning responses as necessary.

The planning framework adopted by Councils needs to be flexible to maximise future land use opportunities as sea levels rise while avoiding unnecessary future expenditure.

Year	Recommended Local Sea-level Rise Projection (metres, based on RCP8.5)	Previous Policy (approx.)
2015	0.00	0.00
2030	0.10	-
2050	0.26	0.35
2070	0.50	-
2100	0.98	0.85

- The projection allows for around 1 metre of sea level rise to 2100 which is slightly higher than the previous state policy.
- The allowance to 2050 is slightly lower than the previous state policy.
- There has been around 0.05m of sea-level rise since 1990



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Questions and Answers

Q. *What is the next step?*

A. Submissions made during public exhibition will be reviewed before finalising and adopting this report. Once adopted, the planning framework will underpin the consideration of sea level rise in future plans and policies.

Q. *How might this affect my property?*

A. Sea level rise and its impacts are real. Some properties will be increasingly affected over time. Council will continue to undertake forward planning and land use investigations to examine site specific impacts.

Q. *How will I know if my property is affected by Sea Level Rise?*

A. If the sea level rise projections are adopted, Council will need to prepare (or review) a Coastal Zone Management Plan. That process will include extensive consultation with the community regarding affected areas. The Department of Planning has directed Councils to provide advice related to coastal hazards on "Section 149" planning certificates. However, this current project does not include amendments to advice on Section 149 certificates

Q. *Does Climate Change affect my household insurance now?*

A. **No.** Climate change projections do not affect insurance costs today. Insurance premiums for all properties have risen substantially over recent years because insurers need to recover their losses following significant natural disasters globally. In NSW, properties in existing flood ways have been hardest hit as insurers try to reduce their known risks.

Callala Beach erosion 1974



Planning Framework

- Significant changes to coasts and estuaries and surrounding land resulting from future sea level rise are inevitable.
- The guiding policy principles that Council will use to underpin coastal management planning are:
 - Integrity
 - Responsibility and custodianship
 - Flexibility
 - Consistency
 - Communication / transparency
 - Minimising complexity



Tomakin River

Further Information

Report Reference: "South Coast Regional Sea Level Rise Policy and Planning Framework".

Prepared by Whitehead & Associates and Coastal Environment, July 2014.

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Lake Conjola coastal inundation



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