

Media release: 8th June 2016

Step up Australia and protect the coast: national coastal leadership and innovation is needed

The Australian Coastal Society is calling for urgent action, a National Coastal Planning and Policy Reform to prevent future 'Collaroy' nightmares, as experienced last weekend.

Australia's coast is undergoing the twin accelerating pressures of climate change and population growth. It is now critical that the only level of government with the capacity, resources and breadth urgently assumes a leadership role, is the Australian Government.

"The incoming federal government must develop innovative approaches to stimulate, prioritise and coordinate the planning and management of the nation's greatest built and natural asset, our coast", said Professor Geoff Wescott, Chair of the Australian Coastal Society

"A national coastal policy and planning reform must take place progressively and cooperatively to address the challenges of who is responsible for administering and funding coastal management. Today's coastal issues are now beyond the capacity of local and state governments."

Given that coastal planning and management crosses many institutional boundaries, such as the planning and management of public and private land, coastal groups and stakeholders are left in the dark with not knowing who is responsible and who must act and take leadership.

"Without a national approach we can not link the actions needed to protect the coast. This is why we are urging the incoming federal government for a National Coastal Planning and Policy Reform", said Professor Wescott.

The Australian Coastal Society, a national coastal policy organisation urges the new incoming federal government to act and lead to prevent future 'Collaroy' nightmares

1. Formulate a National Coastal Policy, in consultation with the states and local government through COAG, formally supported by an Intergovernmental Agreement on Coasts that defines the national need for information and investment in public infrastructure that underpins the provision of those facilities vital to securing the services required for the economic and social well-being of Australia - against the backdrop of continuing environmental change.
2. Establish a National Coastal Information System, similar to that within NOAA in the USA, that will ensure sustained R&D and innovation in coastal biophysical and social sciences; in the development of user-oriented decision support systems; in the coordination of diverse state and local information on risk associated with the adverse impacts of climate change; and in communicating the national adaptation options to communities, the professions and businesses. Such data must be readily and widely available to the whole community.
3. In order to stimulate and facilitate these two critical proposals the in-coming Government should establish a National Coastal Council. This Council should in the first instance (1) conduct a national review of the effectiveness of those actions and investments in coastal planning and management that relate to the long term sustainability of natural and built assets across all levels of government; and (2) provide advice to all levels of government on initiatives and innovations needed to secure adaptation and improved management of coastal ecosystems, infrastructure, social welfare needs and the needs of regional economies.

For media enquiries please contact: admin@australiancoastalsociety.org / 0423846494

For interviews please contact: Professor Geoff Wescott chair@australiancoastalsociety.org /
0418 107 301

- MEDIA RELEASE END -