

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE,  
WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND THE ARTS**

*Chair—Jennie George MP  
Deputy Chair—Mal Washer MP*

Inquiry into the Australian coastal zone

## **The time to act is now — Australian coastal report released last night by Climate Change Committee —**

The House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee last night released its inquiry report, ***Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: the Time to Act is Now***. The report calls for new governance arrangements for Australia's coastal zone and makes recommendations to improve management of climate change and environmental impacts on the coast.

"The key message that emerged from the inquiry is the need for national leadership in managing Australia's coastal zone in the context of climate change. The Committee's recommendations focus on how national leadership can be provided in a collaborative framework with state and local government and how we can better engage the community in this initiative", Committee Chair Ms George said.

"This is an issue of national significance. Some 80 per cent of the Australian population live in the coastal zone, and the concentration of Australia's population and infrastructure along the coast makes us particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including sea level rise".

"Climate change has added a new urgency to improving management of our coastal zone, underlining the message of the Committee's inquiry that **'the time to act is now'**", Ms George said.

The inquiry generated a high level of interest from the Australian community, with over 100 written submissions and 180 exhibits. The Committee heard from over 170 witnesses at 28 public hearings held around Australia. The report's 47 recommendations include:

- a call for national leadership
- a COAG Intergovernmental Agreement on the Coastal Zone, which defines the roles and responsibilities of the three tiers of government involved in coastal zone management
- urgent inquiries into legal and insurance issues relating to climate change impacts on the coastal zone
- improved emergency management arrangements in the event of a climate change related coastal disaster
- an awareness campaign to alert coastal communities to the key challenges facing the coastal zone
- a study into the vulnerability of the Torres Strait to the impacts of climate change
- a comprehensive national assessment of coastal infrastructure vulnerability to sea level rise
- establishment of a system of national coastal zone environmental accounts, expansion of coastal areas protected within Australia's National Reserve System, an increase in the number of coastal wetlands classified as Ramsar sites and implementation of a National Shorebirds Protection Strategy
- establishment of a National Coastal Zone Database to improve access to information

Copies of the report can be obtained from the Committee's website at:  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ccwea/coastalzone/report.htm>

For **media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Ms Jennie George MP, on 02 6277 4260 (Canberra). For **background information**, please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4580 or by email at [ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au).