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Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra

4th July 2008

Dear Dr Sullivan

Marine Coastal Community Network (MCCN) submission to the Inquiry

We thank you for providing MCCN with the opportunity to make a late submission to this 'Inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities'.

During April and May 2008 the MCCN ran a survey to canvass opinions about proposed coastal-related policies of the newly elected Australian Government and the success or not of previous national initiatives. A number of MCCN's survey questions directly relate to the Terms of Reference of this inquiry.

It was considered important to provide MCCN's participants with an opportunity to reflect and present their views on these matters for a number of reasons including the:

- integration of the Labor, Caring for our Coasts Policy into the Caring for our Country Program;
- dedication of 1 of the 6 national priority areas under the Government's, Caring for our Country program, to coastal environments;
- opportunity for focused feedback for the new Government not captured through the Australian 2020 Summit; and
- importance of highlighting some of the factors inhibiting the successful implementation of strategic programs on the ground, in the coastal zone across Australia.

MCCN's survey was distributed to MCCN's participants via hard copies within MCCN's Waves magazine (Vol 14(1) 2008) and as an electronic form attached to the MCCN website. The survey was split into three sections Section A – Australian Government Policy and Programs, 11 questions; Section B – MCCN Services, 1 question ; and Section C – About You, 2 questions.

The survey included both closed and open questions to encourage presentation of respondent's views. To date the responses of 6 closed questions have been summarized by Dr Beverley Clarke, School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management, Flinders University and published in Waves (14(2)). This summary paper is attached and the survey questions analysed are identified below under the inquiry's five Terms of Reference, in the order of their review in Dr Clarke's paper:



1. existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, taking in the catchment-coast-ocean continuum

MCCN Survey Section A – Australian Government Policy and Programs
'Caring for Our Coast'

The new Australian Government has promised to provide national leadership and work with local communities to address the challenges of coastal growth and climate change.

Q 1. Below is a list of the key initiatives the new Australian Government has committed to. Please indicate how important you consider each initiative by circling a number that best represents your views.

'Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)'

The National Cooperative Approach to ICZM – Framework and Implementation Plan was released in 2006. It sets out implementation objectives and actions required to address coastal management issues.

Q 4. Do you think the National Cooperative Approach to ICZM – Framework and Implementation Plan, has been an effective mechanism to deliver improvements in coastal zone management nationally?

Q 5. The 6 'strategic priority areas' of the ICZM – Implementation Plan are listed below. Please rate the success of each priority area since the initiation of the Plan in 2006...?.

2. the environmental impacts of coastal population growth and mechanisms to promote sustainable use of coastal resources

MCCN survey results unavailable at this time

However, please see attached an excerpt from additional comments to MCCN's survey provided by one respondent which raises a number of matters reflected in results to date.

3. the impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise

MCCN survey results unavailable at this time

4. mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities

MCCN survey results unavailable at this time

5. governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone.

MCCN Survey Section A – Australian Government Policy and Programs
'Future role of all spheres of Governments in Coastal Zone Management'

Q 9. Which sphere of Government do you think currently has the most important role for managing the Australian coast ?

Q 10. Which sphere of Government do you think should have the most regulatory control for managing the Australian coast ?

Q 6. Is national leadership required to effectively develop strategic direction for Australia's coast ?

Q7 If yes, what should be the mechanism ?

Q 8. Should there be a national coastal act and supporting coastal policy to strengthen the role of the Commonwealth Government in regulating coastal management in Australia ?

MCCN hopes there is an opportunity in the future to provide the remaining results from MCCN's survey that are relevant to the Terms of Reference and looks forward to the outcomes of this critical and timely Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona Mandelc
National Coordinator
Marine Coastal Community Network, MCCN

Attachment 1: MCCN 2008 Survey Results: What Did You Think ?

Dr Beverley Clarke, School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management, Flinders University

During April and May 2008 the MCCN ran a survey to canvass opinions about the coastal-related policy promises of the newly elected Australian Government and the success of existing national initiatives. The survey was distributed widely via hard copies within MCCN's *Waves* magazine and as an electronic form attached to the MCCN website. This analysis provides an overview of the closed or 'tick box' responses, which provide a general feeling of participant attitudes. Opinions sought through open-ended questions will be presented in the future, for example respondents' views regarding the Australian Government's long-term options for the nation (the 2020 Summit) and ideas for increasing community engagement in coastal and marine environments.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

At the time this analysis was undertaken, the survey had drawn responses from 654 participants from around Australia. Eighty-five hard copies were completed and returned; the remaining 569 responses were submitted electronically. The distribution of responses was slightly skewed towards Victoria (19%, n=126) and New South Wales (17%, n=113 people). Marginally lower responses were received from Queensland (15%), South Australia (12%) and Western Australia (10%).

In terms of classifying responses by groups, state government employees (16%, n=104) and NGOs with a conservation focus (18%, n=118) comprised the largest respondent groups. Local government, research and educational institutions and consultants were also well represented.

SURVEY TOPICS

Favourability of Australian Government Coastal Initiatives

The survey asked participants to rate the importance of key coastal initiatives promised by the newly elected Australian Government. Table 1 shows that the Establishing a Community Coastcare Program was considered by the majority of respondents as the most important initiative, rated by 88% as either 'important' or 'very important'. Seeking the listing of Ningaloo Reef as a World Heritage site was the next most popular of the Australian Government's coastal initiatives (78% of respondents), followed closely by the plan to develop a climate change 'blueprint' for coastal cities and towns (76% of respondents). The least popular of the Australian Government's initiatives was the commitment to assist surf lifesaving clubs install rainwater tanks (almost one-third of respondents rated this as 'not important').

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

The questionnaire asked respondents to consider the effectiveness of the *National Cooperative Approach to ICZM – Framework and Implementation Plan* (the Plan) and of the success of its six strategic priority areas:

- 1 Integration across the catchment-coast-ocean continuum to improve coastal zone decision making;
- 2 Control of land- and marine-based sources of pollution;
- 3 Addressing climate change (CC);
- 4 Addressing pest plants and animals;
- 5 Planning for population change;
- 6 Enhancing capacity building.

Significantly, half of the respondents (326 respondents) indicated they were unaware of the Plan. Of those people who felt confident to rate the effectiveness of the Plan (328 respondents), less than 20% had confidence in its achievements.

Forty respondents thought the Plan had been successful and a further 83 thought it only partially successful on the grounds that: it will take time for results to show; jurisdictional fragmentation continues to inhibit progress in coastal management; there is a lack of resourcing to support the implementation of the Plan; and there is lack of political will to promote the intentions of the Plan. Sixteen per cent (103 respondents) thought the Plan had not been effective for the following reasons: it lacks 'teeth'; it hasn't been implemented; and it is not widely recognised.

Current and Future Roles of Government in Coastal Zone Management

State government was identified by 32% of respondents as currently having the most important role in managing Australia's coast while 24% nominated local government and 14% the Commonwealth. However, when asked which sphere of government SHOULD have most regulatory control, 40% of respondents chose the Commonwealth, 21% the states and 10% local government.

The questionnaire asked MCCN members their preferences regarding an increased national role for future management of the coastal zone. Seventy-four per cent of respondents felt that national leadership was required for future direction setting at the coast. Of the options presented as to how this leadership role should be realised – an independent coastal council or Commonwealth Government agency – 36% thought that an independent coastal council should be the mechanism for that leadership while 26% thought a Commonwealth Government agency should have this responsibility. In addition to a body or agency to oversee direction setting, 65% of respondents thought that a supporting national coastal act would be appropriate.

IN SUMMARY

This survey has revealed some contentious and challenging food for thought. There is much to do around the country to raise awareness and progress the Caring for our Coast initiatives. The results of this survey have the potential to be used to advocate for action to be taken on various matters. With luck, the MCCN network will be in operation in the future so that subsequent editions of *Waves* can report back on the progress of the promised Australian Government initiatives.

Once again, respondent comments show support for the role and activities provided by the MCCN and give encouragement for the continuation of existing services.

Many thanks go to the individuals who took their time to share their ideas and opinions. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Table 1: MCCN Survey Results – Opinions Related to Australian Government proposed Policy and Programs

Key Coastal Initiatives	Perceived Importance: Very Important or Important %
Establishing a \$100 million, five-year, Community Coastcare Program	88 (n=573)
Seeking World Heritage listing for Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia	78 (n=507)
Embarking on a national consultation with coastal councils, coastal natural resource management (NRM) groups, capital city mayors, academics, community groups and state and territory governments to develop a blueprint for coastal cities and towns to meet current and future climate challenges	76 (n=499)
Investing \$200 million in a five-year Great Barrier Reef Rescue Plan to help secure the Reef from climate change and declining water quality	74 (n=486)
Providing \$25 million over five years to help prepare coastal communities for the impact of climate change using funds provided to the Australian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation	65 (n=425)
Updating and improving the Australian Disaster Mitigation Package to take into account severe weather and storms due to climate change	63 (n=411)
Handing over Point Nepean and Malabar Headlands to the Victorian and NSW Governments for protection as national park and public open space	62 (n=405)
Investing up to \$3 million to assist Surf Life Saving Clubs in Australia install a rainwater tank as part of the National Water Security Plan for Towns & Cities	41 (n=263)

Attachment 2: Excerpt from additional comments to MCCN's survey - provided by one community member

...One of our biggest gripes as a coastal volunteer on-ground group is the complete failure of most government instrumentalities to act to clean up pollution in their own area of responsibility - eg.

- The Water Authority here won't run the main sewer to coastal public toilets and surfclubs, so the swimming beaches are polluted with sewerage and heavy metals;
- The local government council allows storm water drainage off roads, footpaths and dog paths to enter coastal bush reserves and beaches via drains;
- Landowners of houses adjacent to the beach allow huge growths of weeds on their properties, that allow weed seed to blow into the coastal reserve.
- Sandboarding and motor-bike riding are popular past-times for kids, but are rapidly eroding coastal dunes, and no-one seems willing to take any stand against them.

So talk of "integration across the catchment - coast - ocean continuum" as government policy seems to our group like just more hot air.

"Addressing climate change" - more hot air, while governments allow coastal residential development just above sea level to continue unchecked.

"Addressing pest plants and animals" - we haven't seen much evidence of willingness to do this around here. Addressing pest weeds is more than a twelve-month program - there's a bank of weed seed in the soil that will continue to germinate for at least 5 years - so why don't weed programs acknowledge that? Foxes are a problem around here, but no-one wants to undertake control. Some of the new English migrants here think that they're cute, a sort of 'genuine' wildlife.

"Enhancing capacity building": this is another word for running a talk-fest with a highly paid facilitator taking up volunteers' time, and using up grant money.

Training of volunteers is best done out in the field, showing them what needs doing on-ground and working next to them.

On the bureaucracy issue, as a volunteer representative, I sit on a couple of local government and NRM committees, and I can tell you that the main focus of the former is keeping all the decision-making power within local government, and the main focus of the latter is ensuring that its paid staff engage in constant meetings and consultations, to justify their salaries. "Prioritising" plans seems to be a constant theme of government - it sounds great and "accountable", but ensures that very little actually gets done. The money gets used up in a constant round of consultation, government travel, preparation of plans and strategies, but not a lot seems to happen on the ground.

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