PITTWATER COUNCIL

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Submission No: 10
Date Received: 22-5-08
Secretary:

Mark Ferguson, General Manager
8am to 5:30pm Mon - Thurs, 8am to 5pm Fri

21 May 2008

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA NSW 2600

Dear Ms Holmes

On behalf of Pittwater Council we thank the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Australian Coastal Communities.

Council recognises that forced climate change and the increasing exploitation of coastal zone resources represents a sustainability crisis for coastal communities and coastal ecosystems.

The nation will look to the Commonwealth Government to provide strong and decisive leadership, free from adversarial politics, in order to plan, co-ordinate and resource the actions necessary to avert or at least diminish the threats to life, health, property and the environment from climate change impacts.

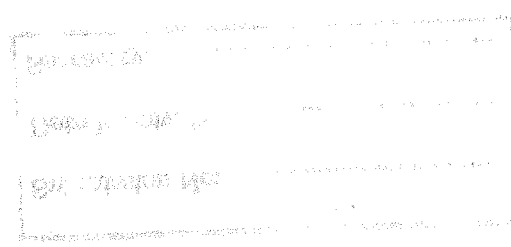
Council is under no illusions as to the scale, complexity and difficulty of the tasks at hand, but is heartened by the emerging climate change agenda of the Australian Government as well as its renewed interest in coastal zone management issues.

Pittwater Council takes great pleasure in providing the attached submission to the Inquiry (endorsed at the Council meeting of 19 May 2008) and trusts it will provide some assistance in the deliberations of the Committee.

Yours faithfully

Cr David James
MAYOR

Mark J Ferguson
GENERAL MANAGER



PITTWATER COUNCIL

Inquiry Into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Coastal Communities

Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts

May 2008

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1.0 PREAMBLE

The Pittwater local government area covers a total area of about 125km^2 (including the Pittwater waterway) and features some 117 kilometres of estuarine and open ocean coastline. Many of the almost 57,000 residents of Pittwater live on the Barrenjoey peninsula and the foreshores of the Pittwater estuary and enjoy the amenity of ocean beaches and rockpools, rugged coastal headlands and tranquil waterways framed by extensive areas of bushland, including two national parks. A demographic snapshot of the Pittwater local government area is included as Appendix A.

Being a coastal council, Pittwater is vulnerable to hazards that are either caused or exacerbated by sea level rise as well as changes in the frequency and intensity of storm activity. Council is currently involved in an array of studies to better determine the value of its coastal resources, the likely impacts of more severe coastal erosion, the risks associated with widespread inundation of low lying coastal lands and flooding in urban catchments.

Apart from the potential impacts upon the community, the Pittwater LGA also stands to suffer much ecological damage as a result of climate change impacts. Due to the pattern of development and the topography, Pittwater has no suitable adjoining lands for the recolonisation or gradual retreat of extensive areas of coastal dunes, coastal saltmarsh, mangroves and freshwater wetlands.

Changes in temperature and rainfall may cause marked variation in the range and abundance of certain species of flora and fauna and even the potential demise of a number of threatened species and endangered ecological communities.

As a microcosm of the assets, infrastructure and natural resources at risk from the effects of climate change elsewhere on the Australian coast, Pittwater highlights the potential extent of the social, economic and environmental losses and dislocations that could be expected if appropriate, effective actions at global, national and local scales are not taken in time.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Pittwater Council welcomes the renewed interest of the Australian Government in the sustainable use and management of the coastal zone.

In November 1993, the Coastal Zone Inquiry Final Report was completed by the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) and since the release of the Inquiry Report, much appears to have changed in the coastal zone. The 'seachange' phenomenon has seen emerge a pattern of migration to and settlement on the coastal fringe that has driven an upsurge of opportunistic and sometimes poorly planned coastal development.

Much of the growth has occurred in regional areas, ill equipped to provide the services and infrastructure necessary to support their burgeoning populations. Lifestyle development in the coastal zone, however, is often undertaken at the expense of valuable and productive agricultural land and to the detriment of the ecosystem services that are so vital for our survival and well-being.

Similarly our major coastal cities and regional centres continue to grow and sprawl over areas that were formerly dominated by rural activities. This type of urban expansion mostly relies upon ageing infrastructure that was neither intended to cope with the greatly increased population densities nor designed with ecological sustainability in mind.

The inevitable consequences are the pollution of coastal waters by stormwater runoff and effluent disposal, the degradation of beaches, estuaries, bushland and other natural environments through poorly controlled land use and the eventual loss of habitat and biodiversity.

Much has changed, but little has really changed. Having due regard for the principles of ecological sustainability, the Coastal Zone Inquiry presented detailed findings on the future use of our coastal zone resources and made a multitude of recommendations as to how these resources could be best managed in the face of a rapidly growing coastal population. The Inquiry even considered impacts that may be associated with climate change.

Furthermore, the RAC undertook an exhaustive investigation over a number of years into the resources, values and uses of the coastal zone. The RAC reviewed the legislative and regulatory provisions, assessed policies and management plans and analysed the governance and institutional arrangements involved in coastal zone management.

The Inquiry's recommendations and implementation actions defined in detail how the coastal zone and its resources could be sustainably managed by integrating the regulatory and economic instruments and institutional arrangements of all spheres of government (RAC, 1993).

Today, the Inquiry Report makes interesting reading not just for its often prophetic accuracy but also because it highlights the lack of progress that has been made in sustainably using and managing any of our precious but finite natural resources. Almost 15 years after the Coastal Zone Inquiry report was completed, all spheres of governance in Australia continue to grapple with the reforms necessary to implement a successful system of integrated coastal zone management even as the potential impacts of climate change threaten to render many existing management provisions redundant.

Governments, corporations and the community now find themselves bombarded by a barrage of new scientific research on global warming and constant warnings of the urgent need to take action. Unfortunately, the daunting array of potential actions and solutions is confronting, even confusing, particularly when the solutions are often discredited before they can be enacted, take for example the biofuels debate.

Climate change challenges our entire social structure and way of life in such a way as to overwhelm our ability to enact any of the necessary actions quickly or in a co-ordinated manner. The importance of the Inquiry into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Coastal Communities should not be under-estimated, nor should the task of governments in overcoming the paralysis that is now threatening to stymie climate change action.

In this difficult socio-political environment we must formulate policy and legislation, fund and develop new and untried technologies, change behaviour and restructure bureaucracies to deliver the necessary measures to adapt to and mitigate forced climate change (Stewart, 2008).

The comments and suggestions that follow address each of the terms of reference in turn, predominantly from the perspective of local government in NSW. Pittwater Council hopes that this submission is of some assistance to the Inquiry.

3.0 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1
Develop a co-operative coastal zone management agreement between commonwealth, state and local governments that utilises a common set of objectives and criteria to be used in managing the resources of the Australian coastal zone.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Provide full funding (ie no local government contribution) for the development and implementation of all Hazard Management Programs administered by local government including bushfire, floodplain, estuary and coastline hazard management programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Make better use of existing institutional arrangements and mechanisms to allocate management responsibilities for the sustainable use of coastal resources in accordance with agreed national objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Prescribe projected sea level rise values to be used by local government for strategic planning purposes and when establishing development controls to deal with the risks associated with sea level rise.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Indemnify local government for advice given in good faith regarding all natural hazards including those that may be caused or exacerbated by climate change including, but not necessarily limited to, landslide, bushfire, coastal erosion, coastal recession, flood and coastal inundation.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Clarify responsibilities and develop agreed responses for all combat agencies in the emergency management of coastal storm events in line with a national protocol including the level of protection that will be afforded private property and assets under immediate threat.

RECOMMENDATION 7
Make adequate provision for the management of coastal resources across political and jurisdictional boundaries and ensure that both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are addressed as interdependent biophysical units by all management authorities.

RECOMMENDATION 8
Provide Constitutional recognition of local government as a sphere of governance in its own right.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Re-establish the Coastal Council of NSW and establish similar independent professional bodies for each state and territory to oversee coastal zone management and ensure it is consistent with the agreed national objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 10
Reintroduce federal, state and local government tripartite agreements that include local government as an equal partner in the determination of planning, management and funding arrangements to sustainably manage coastal zone resources.

4.0 EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT, TAKING IN THE CATCHMENT-COAST-OCEAN CONTINUUM

4.1 The Framework for a National Co-operative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (the Framework) endorsed by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council does not adequately implement the recommendations of the RAC Inquiry Report. As an over-arching coastal zone management 'roadmap', the Framework relies too heavily on state governments to voluntarily align their coastal management policies and initiatives with the strategic priorities, implementation objectives and actions of the Framework. As was originally recommended in the Coastal Zone Inquiry, a co-operative coastal zone management agreement needs to be developed between commonwealth, state and local governments.

4.2 At the moment, the catchment-coast-ocean continuum in NSW is fragmented by the management arrangements and responsibilities of the state government agencies. Management of the coastal zone has been largely overlooked by the NSW Natural Resource Management Commission and coastal resource management issues are not well represented in the Catchment Action Plans (CAP) compiled by Catchment Management Authorities (CMA). Coastal resource management responsibilities lie with a number of state agencies including the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Department of Primary Industries, Lands NSW, NSW Maritime and the Department of Planning. There is little integration between agencies and between local government and agencies.

4.3 By way of example, Pittwater Council is in the process of preparing an Estuary Management Plan for the Pittwater estuary in accordance with the NSW Estuary Management Policy. In order to better protect an important seagrass, mudflat, saltmarsh and mangrove complex at Careel Bay, Council has sought the assistance of a number of state agencies to have the bay nominated as an aquatic reserve and to relocate boat moorings out of *Posidonia australis* seagrass beds to prevent damage by mooring chains. The process has taken several years with little action from the responsible agencies. In frustration, Council has sought and acquired funding from the Hawkesbury Nepean CMA to install seagrass friendly moorings in the affected areas to replace existing swing moorings even though this is not the responsibility of either council or the CMA. The aquatic reserve nomination remains unresolved while responsibility for this function is being transferred from the Department of Primary Industries to the Department of Environment and Climate Change following a restructure.

4.4 Constant restructuring of state agencies and the reallocation of functions, resources and responsibilities has lead to a duplication of effort, a misalignment of responsibility for the management of resources and a dilution or loss of relevant expertise within agencies in charge of specialist management functions.

4.5 Most councils are also hindered in their ability to adequately manage their coastal zones because they are constrained by available financial resources and have limited access to the necessary expertise. In NSW, the state government obliges coastal councils to develop and implement management plans in conformity with the requirements of a number of state policies including the Flood Prone Land Policy, Coastal Policy of NSW and the NSW Estuary Management Policy. These plans must be endorsed by the state

government if local government is to obtain exemption from liability for advice given or planning and consent decisions made in regard to land affected by flood and coastline hazards.

4.6 All costs associated with the implementation and ongoing management and maintenance required by these plans are borne by councils and are largely met through rate revenue and user charges. With the exception of state government capital assistance grants (for which councils must be a 50% equity partner), the financial burden upon councils to manage coastal resources is considerable and climate change impacts will certainly exacerbate this situation.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop a co-operative coastal zone management agreement between commonwealth, state and local governments that utilises a common set of objectives and criteria to be used in managing the resources of the Australian coastal zone.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide full funding (ie no local government contribution) for the development and implementation of all Hazard Management Programs administered by local government including bushfire, floodplain, estuary and coastline hazard management programs.

5.0 THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF COASTAL POPULATION GROWTH AND MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF COASTAL RESOURCES

5.1 Australians enjoy one of the highest living standards in the developed world. The availability of cheap and plentiful energy and resources has seen the Australian economy achieving steady growth over a long period of time. Our lifestyle and civilised existence, however, are totally dependent on natural capital, ie the renewable and non-renewable natural resources of the biosphere.

5.2 Unfortunately, natural capital is not infinitely expandable to meet the resource needs of economic and human population growth. In fact, our stocks of natural resources are currently fixed or in decline while our population and its consumption of resources are increasing (Rees, 1996). While improved technology may temporarily increase the carrying capacity of the coastal zone, there is a limit to the number of individuals that can be supported before the environment is degraded, carrying capacity declines and the population is no longer sustainable.

5.3 Urban sprawl is a resource hungry, wasteful and uneconomical means of expansion. Spreading the population thinly over vast areas of the coastal zone dramatically increases the costs of providing services and infrastructure to the new communities. Rural and productive agricultural land is frequently lost to subdivision for suburban development, rural retreats and hobby farms. Not only does this process further degrade the coastal environment through land clearing, drainage and competition for the use of available resources, but

also reduces the nation's capacity to feed and sustain a growing population in the future.

5.4 Many difficulties exist in trying to reduce the ecological footprint associated with coastal population growth, not the least of which is the unavoidable energy and resources threshold required to maintain our lifestyles. No matter how frugal and self sufficient we may try to be as individuals, there is a minimum level of services and infrastructure that we all demand as a society. This includes road and transport networks, hospitals, schools, other public infrastructure and public open space. Because our standard of living is so high, even what is considered a basic level of service and infrastructure by Australians represents a level of resource and energy consumption far in excess of what is currently available to the populations of developing nations.

5.5 In this regard, new land releases for low density residential development, which have historically been a favoured means of accommodating a growing population, can no longer be considered sustainable. Urban renewal, urban consolidation and higher density urban infill (in centres of population with existing levels of infrastructure best able to cope with population growth) must be promoted as the primary means of accommodating population growth in both metropolitan and regional housing strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Make better use of existing institutional arrangements and mechanisms to allocate management responsibilities for the sustainable use of coastal resources in accordance with agreed national objectives.

6.0 THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN COASTAL AREAS AND STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, PARTICULARLY IN RESPONSE TO PROJECTED SEA LEVEL RISE

6.1 On the basis of scientific investigations and climate modelling undertaken by the CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (CSIRO, 2007), before the latter part of this century most of the NSW coastal area including the Pittwater LGA is likely to:

- become warmer, on average, with more hot days over 35°C (and therefore tolerate a consequently higher risk of bushfires);
- experience a decline in average annual rainfall with a corresponding reduction in rainfall runoff, groundwater recharge and steam flows;
- suffer the effects of more frequent, extreme storms and intense rainfall events as well as more severe drought cycles; and
- incur more severe coastal erosion and coastal inundation as a result of more powerful storm surges combined with a rising sea level.

6.2 As is the case for most coastal councils, the major concern of Pittwater Council is the likely impacts of sea level rise on the population, infrastructure and assets located in vulnerable parts of the coastal zone. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) has projected a global average sea level rise (excluding future rapid dynamical changes in iceflow) of between 0.18m and 0.59m for the range of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenarios developed.

6.3 Recent investigation undertaken by the CSIRO suggests that both global average surface warming and sea level rise are currently trending towards the

high end values for the GHG emission scenarios. Research presented to the European Geosciences Union in Vienna during April 2008, supports the CSIRO findings and suggests that the contribution to sea level from ice sheet melting and warming ocean water could see sea level rise by between 0.8m and 1.5m by the end of the century (New Scientist, 2008).

6.4 The uncertainty in the likely range of sea level rise creates significant problems for governments undertaking strategic planning to adapt to climate change impacts, in particular local government which is responsible for administering environmental planning provisions required for development.

6.5 Whilst local government in NSW is beginning to receive some useful guidance from state government agencies regarding climate change considerations for flood prone lands (McLuckie, 2007) there is an urgent need for a unified national response to the necessary planning provisions, resourcing and legislative support that must be enacted by each state to support local government in administering climate change adaptation strategies.

6.6 Local government requires a higher level of agreement on the likely range of values for sea level rise to be applied for both short and long term planning horizons when approving development in the coastal zone. The indemnification provisions for councils under S733 of the *NSW Local Government Act 1993* (LGAct) also need to be expanded to cover all natural hazards that may be caused or exacerbated by climate change including, but not necessarily limited to, landslide, bushfire, coastal erosion, coastal recession, flood and coastal inundation.

6.7 Adaptation strategies for sea level rise impacts include measures such as:

- landuse rezoning;
- planned retreat for development;
- ambulatory boundaries for public foreshore reservations and high water mark (HWM) boundaries
- foreshore reclamation;
- engineered sea defences;
- beach nourishment;
- land fill;
- property resumption; and
- public access provisions to foreshores, beaches and headlands.

Local government must have legislative and regulatory certainty in order to be able to implement the range of adaptation measures that may be necessary without exposure to legal challenge or prohibitive compensation costs.

6.8 Local government will also need assistance from national investment programs to ensure that vulnerable infrastructure is protected or adjusted to cope with climate change and sea level rise, eg roads, bridges and drainage infrastructure, public and community buildings as well as reticulated water and sewerage infrastructure.

6.9 Adaptation measures in isolation are not the panacea for climate change. The mitigation of global warming and climate change effects must be seen as complementary to climate change adaptation. Adaptation and mitigation actions must be taken simultaneously and given equal consideration in the management of climate change. If adaptation is to remain a viable and

affordable option to retain our coastal communities and our lifestyles then effective global mitigation must arrest global warming before the tipping points are reached for dangerous climate change.

6.10 The Interim Report on Climate Change released this year by the Garnaut Climate Change Review highlights Australia's exceptional sensitivity to climate change among the developed nations and stresses the urgent need for an integrated global response to the causes and effects of global warming (Garnaut, 2008). Commonwealth government actions that would assist to this end include:

- develop domestic and international multilateral agreements to accelerate the process of implementing comprehensive climate change mitigation actions at a global scale;
- integrated policies and programs to minimise the national carbon footprint including the necessary supporting legislation and provisions to enact an emissions trading scheme, introduce national energy, fuel and building efficiency standards, develop clean and renewable energy production technologies and infrastructure as well as make the necessary reforms to taxation and resource pricing to support these technologies;
- make firm commitments to stringent national greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2020 and each subsequent decade thereafter, in order to achieve the Commonwealth Government's stated GHG reduction target of 60% on 2000 levels by 2050; and
- be prepared to go beyond the stated reduction target if international agreements (and in particularly the Bali roadmap discussion) so dictate.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Prescribe projected sea level rise values to be used by local government for strategic planning purposes and when establishing development controls to deal with the risks associated with sea level rise.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Indemnify local government for advice given in good faith regarding all natural hazards including those that may be caused or exacerbated by climate change including, but not necessarily limited to, landslide, bushfire, coastal erosion, coastal recession, flood and coastal inundation.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Clarify responsibilities and develop agreed responses for all combat agencies in the emergency management of coastal storm events in line with a national protocol including the level of protection that will be afforded private property and assets under immediate threat.

7.0 MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE COASTAL COMMUNITIES

7.1 Strong leadership from all spheres of government to address agreed management priorities at the national, regional and local scale is an important starting point. Management arrangements also need to operate and be consistently applied across jurisdictional boundaries. Natural resources management must be based upon regional catchments or bio-physical units and must include the marine as well as the terrestrial components of ecosystems.

7.2 Community and stakeholder engagement and the provision of targeted, scale-relevant and accurate information relating to government sustainability policies and initiatives can greatly assist in the implementation of management strategies and programs.

7.3 Provide the necessary capacity building and support for decision-makers in government, business and industry so that sustainability principles are incorporated into policy and operational decisions at all scales.

7.4 Afford greater protection to natural ecosystems to reduce fragmentation, improve connectivity and improve resilience to stresses and threatening processes including climate change. This will require the identification of the sensitivity and vulnerability of the ecosystem or ecological community involved.

7.5 A higher degree of protection must be afforded to marine ecosystems in order to conserve biodiversity. To this end, a system of interconnected national parks, marine parks, aquatic reserves and inter-tidal protection areas should be developed to protect marine flora and fauna as well as reefs, rock platforms and other intertidal habitat, spawning grounds and fish nurseries.

7.6 Strengthen and co-ordinate national, state and regional strategic planning provisions to:

- improve public transport networks and connectivity between centres of population;
- increase population densities in those major centres with infrastructure best able to cope;
- conserve remaining farmland and encourage more agriculture and food production in proximity to centres of population;
- introduce pricing that better reflects the true value of water and energy resources, together with incentives to encourage the conservation of resources and higher levels of self-sufficiency;
- introduce a national system of standardised incentives such as rebates, feed-in tariffs and taxation reductions to encourage domestic and community renewable energy production as well as the rapid adoption of "clean" energy technologies;
- provide appropriate guidance and direction to consent authorities in order to develop appropriate planning criteria for climate change impacts, in particular an agreed planning level for sea level rise for relevant planning horizons; and
- revise building codes and development controls to enable greater flexibility in building design, better use of passive solar design principles and materials use as well as other innovations in the types and scale of housing construction that can be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Make adequate provision for the management of coastal resources across political and jurisdictional boundaries and ensure that both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are addressed as interdependent biophysical units by all management authorities.

8.0 GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR COASTAL ZONES

8.1 Whilst coastal zone management issues span the responsibilities of all spheres of government, the legislative power for the management of the coastal zone and its resources lies predominantly with state governments. State laws cover such matters as environmental planning, environmental protection, resources allocation and protection and the management of public lands. State legislation also empowers government agencies to provide essential services such as water supply, sewage treatment, energy supply, roads construction and maintenance and the provision of ports and transport services.

8.2 Local government plays a major role in the management of the coastal zone, particularly in regard to the day-to-day decisions that are made about the use of coastal land and resources. Local government is also empowered by Local Government Acts (state legislation) to administer the areas of their jurisdiction and make by-laws. In administering the state legislation for which they have responsibility, councils regulate and control most of the activities that take place in the coastal zone including development, the use of resources by the community and the protection of the environment.

8.3 At the same time that the state governments have been devolving more responsibility to local government to deliver effective coastal zone management outcomes, there has been a decline in the level of support and expertise provided by state government agencies to councils to develop the necessary management strategies.

8.4 In October 2003, the NSW Government announced the establishment of new CMAs as a key component in delivering sustainable management outcomes under the Natural Resource Management (NRM) reform program. Among other sweeping changes, the NRM reforms saw the restructuring of state government agencies and their financial arrangements as well as the:

- abolition of the Coast and Clean Seas Program;
- termination of the tripartite arrangement between commonwealth, state and local government;
- dissolution of the Coastal Council of NSW; and
- abandonment of the Coastcare Program.

8.5 In the ensuing five year period, most of the functions that had been provided under these programs and by these organisations have become the sole responsibility of local government, even though the programs were originally funded by the Commonwealth Government. Of greater concern to local government, and coastal councils in particular, was the failure of the NRM reform program to place appropriate importance on the management and protection of the coastal zone of NSW despite its very significant contribution to the state's economy.

8.6 The state government had refocussed on the management and protection of natural vegetation and water resources in the inland catchments at the expense of the coastal zone. Not only were financial resources directed away from the coast, but valuable management expertise that had already been steadily eroding from state agencies over a long period of time was suddenly lost through wholesale restructuring. Local government is now obliged to engage external consultants to provide most of its specialist coastal management advice as such expertise and experience is not usually available in-house.

8.7 In order to fund the establishment of the CMAs and the NRM programs, funding resources were also redistributed from state agencies on the basis that certain functions would be taken over by the CMAs. Significant, further reductions were subsequently made to the Coastal and Estuary Management Program budgets which have never been restored to previous levels. This has reduced the ability of coastal councils to acquire matching funding from the state government to undertake coastal protection and infrastructure capital works projects.

8.8 The funding shortfalls for coastal management programs were not redistributed through the CMAs for coastal resource management projects. As coastal zone management issues had not been adequately addressed in the Catchment Blueprints, coastal resource projects were only included in CMA programs after the CAPs and associated investment strategies had been completed and endorsed by the state government. The CAPs are prepared by each CMA and are not consistent in the range of coastal resources that they now include, the targets created to manage these resources or the manner by which the outcomes are measured.

8.9 Perhaps the most significant failing of the restructuring in respect of the appropriate development and management of the coastal zone was the abolition of the Coastal Council of NSW. The Coastal Council played a vital role in its provision of independent, professional advice to the NSW Government and as a 'watchdog' to ensure that the provisions of the *NSW Coastal Policy 1997* and associated legislation were adhered to, properly administered and fully understood by both government and non-government organisations.

8.10 More recently the state government has embarked on a program to comprehensively reform the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) together with associated legislation. The reforms are designed to streamline and simplify the plan-making process and provide greater flexibility and certainty in the NSW Planning System. Substantial concerns have been raised by local government regarding the potential implications of the reforms including:

- the community's ability to participate in planning processes has been significantly eroded as the system has become far more discretionary, particularly with the introduction of Part 3A to the EP&A Act;
- the environmental assessment provisions under Part 3A are ad hoc and completely at the discretion of the Director-General as there are currently no criteria by which the Director-General can set environmental assessment requirements;

- failure on the Director-General's part to consult with other agencies, particularly in regard to issues such as pollution, heritage and threatened species does not necessarily invalidate an approval under Part 3A;
- Part 3A also allows for the approval of concept plans, which makes effective assessment of these projects most difficult when the potential environmental effects remain unclear;
- a lack of objective criteria to which the Minister must have regard when determining that certain projects are critical infrastructure projects under Part 3A;
- the dramatic increase proposed for development classified as exempt and complying development that will be specified by standardised guidelines that may not take account of the unique attributes and environmental and heritage values of each local government area;
- the additional resources that will need to be provided by councils in order to facilitate the proposed reforms to the development assessment process;
- confusion as to what constitutes "emergency works" under SEPP (infrastructure) 2007 and the environmental, engineering and emergency management considerations that should apply to such work, particularly in regard to coastal erosion; and
- restrictions on the ability of councils to levy development contributions for key community infrastructure.

8.11 The reforms to the NSW Planning System have the potential to undermine the planning powers of local government and circumvent public involvement and transparent and accountable decision making. This could encourage ad hoc development in the coastal zone that may not be compatible with Commonwealth objectives or local coastal management strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 8
Provide Constitutional recognition of local government as a sphere of governance in its own right.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Re-establish the Coastal Council of NSW and establish similar independent professional bodies for each state and territory to oversee coastal zone management and ensure it is consistent with the agreed national objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 10
Reintroduce federal, state and local government tripartite agreements that include local government as an equal partner in the determination of planning, management and funding arrangements to sustainably manage coastal zone resources.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The natural resources of our coastal zone are being degraded by the effects of human activities which include impacts from enhanced global warming.

A growing population that is taking up residence predominantly on the coast together with substantial increases in coastal tourism numbers has caused rapid urban expansion and dramatically increased pressure on the resources of the fragile coastal zone.

Whilst this expansion has provided new economic, employment and recreational opportunities, it has also lead to greater competition for the use of coastal resources.

The cumulative impacts of urban expansion in the coastal zone include:

- loss of rural land previously used for productive purposes;
- habitat loss and a consequent loss of biodiversity, particularly fish stocks;
- water quality deterioration from urban runoff;
- increased levels of greenhouse gas emissions;
- over exploitation of natural resources leading to degradation of the coastal zone environment.

Intergovernmental co-ordination remains the major hurdle to successfully implementing integrated management of the coastal zone and its resources. This could be improved if all spheres of government agreed on a common set of objectives and criteria to be used in managing the resources of the coastal zone.

A major challenge to the sustainability of coastal communities is the effects of climate change, particularly sea level rise. Coastal management strategies will need to include appropriate adaptation provisions for climate change impacts and strong leadership and guidance must be provided by state governments through the development of appropriate policy frameworks, legislation and financial support.

The commonwealth government must simultaneously push for international collaboration to reduce GHG emissions in order to progress effective global climate change action.

With over 86% of Australia's population currently residing in the coastal zone, the sustainable management of coastal zone resources must be given new prominence by the commonwealth government. There has been a long period of relative inertia in implementing effective and co-ordinated management action since the release of the RAC Coastal Zone Inquiry. Pittwater Council hopes that the Inquiry Into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Coastal Communities will go a considerable way in redressing this situation.

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11.0 APPENDIX A

Section 1 - Overview

Our Community

Quick Stats

Pittwater's Community Profile gives a snapshot of the demographics of Pittwater's resident population. It has been compiled using the 2006 Census data. Further details of the 2006 Census can be found at www.pittwater.nsw.gov.au/community/community_profile

	Pittwater Resident Population		NSW
	Num	%	%
POPULATION, EXCLUDING OVERSEAS VISITORS			
Total population	56,619	100.0	100.0
Males	27,807	49.2	49.3
Females	28,762	50.8	50.7
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS			
Indigenous population	170	0.3	2.1
Australian born	40,709	71.9	69.0
Overseas born	12,060	21.3	23.9
Australian citizens	49,089	86.7	85.8
Australian citizens aged 18+	36,916	65.2	62.2
Institutional population	792	1.4	2.7
HOUSEHOLDS & DWELLINGS			
Owned	7,643	41.0	34.8
Purchasing	6,845	36.7	31.9
Renting	3,474	18.6	29.5
Average household size (persons)	2.65	--	--

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 & informed decision, 2009 (http://www.id.com.au)

Age Structure

Pittwater's age structure has significantly changed over the last 5 years. Notably we have seen a large decrease (1672 persons) in people aged 18 to 49 years and a large increase (1492 person) in people aged 50 to 69 years.

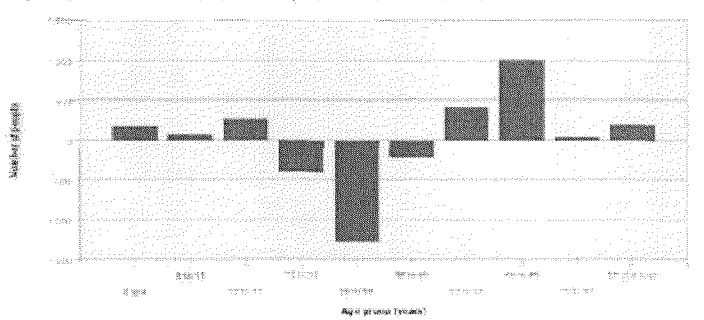
To get a more complete picture of the demographic characteristics of an area, the age structure should be viewed in conjunction with Households and Family Types.

- 24.3% of the population was aged between 0 to 17 years
- 20.0% were aged 60 years and over
- 60+ population is 4.1% larger than the Sydney Statistical Division

Possible observations for this change in age structure include:

- Pittwater becoming an attractive retirement location
- 18 to 34 year olds finding it difficult to afford housing in Pittwater
- A high proportion of 35 to 49 year olds, coupled with the fact that people are having children later in life, means that there is an increase in 0 to 17 year olds

Change in age structure of Pittwater Council area, 2001 to 2006 (Enumerated data)



Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 & 2001 Census and informed decision, 2009 (http://www.id.com.au)

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