


Submission No: 71
Date Received: 5-6-08
Secretary: 



Conservation Council
of South Australia Inc
ABN 22 020 026 644

Level 1, 157 Franklin Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Ph: (08) 8223 5155
Fax: (08) 8232 4782
general@ccsa.asn.au
www.ccsa.asn.au

5 June 2008

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change,
Water, Environment and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
Canberra ACT 2600
ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au

RE: *Inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities*

Dear Sir/ Madam

Please find attached a submission from the **Conservation Council of South Australia (CCSA)** in relation to the inquiry into climate change and impacts on coastal communities.

CCSA is SA's peak non-government community environment and conservation organisation. Formed in 1971 it is an umbrella group representing 57 of the states' diverse environment and conservation organisations.

Unfortunately, due to the short timelines it has not been possible to canvass the opinions and receive feedback from all of our member groups, so the following submission should not be taken as a completely comprehensive statement on their behalf.

CCSA does however welcome the opportunity to have its opinions considered and to contribute to the debate surrounding the environmental impacts of climate change. This will clearly have major impacts on our coastal communities and the ecosystems they are located within.

If you require any clarification regarding any aspects of this submission, please feel free to contact me at campaigns@ccsa.asn.au

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission

Yours Sincerely

James Danenberg BA (Hons)
Campaigner

General Comments

Terms of Reference:

1. Existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, taking into account catchment-coast-ocean continuum
2. The environmental impacts of coastal population growth and mechanisms to promote sustainable use of coastal resources
3. The impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with the climate changes adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise
4. Mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities
5. Governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone

Specific Comments

<p>1.</p>	<p>Existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, taking into account catchment-coast-ocean continuum</p>
<p>Estuaries policy</p> <p>Adelaide's Living Beaches</p> <p>Adelaide Coastal Waters Quality Implementation Plan</p>	<p>Immediate publication and implementation of the <i>Estuaries Policy for SA</i>, which is still in draft form (DEH 2005).</p> <p>Needs to work in conjunction with the Adelaide Coastal Waters Quality Implementation Plan (ACWQIP).</p> <p>This plan needs to have ministerial commitment and legislative backing to effectively and quickly be rolled out and have an immediate impact in terms of infrastructure development and hence water quality improvement.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>The environmental impacts of coastal population growth and mechanisms to promote sustainable use of coastal resources</p>
<p>Development planning</p>	<p>An urgent upgrade of development planning in Australia is needed to factor in and account for projected sea level rises, including storm surges and how infrastructure such as wastewater treatment plants, and energy infrastructure will cope under these scenarios.</p>
<p>Existing inappropriate development</p>	<p>In SA there are a number of off-road recreational facilities that are in vulnerable areas, for which the land could be used as buffer zones and/or revegetation and re-establishment of coastal ecology to mitigate against changes in storm activity and sea level rise impacts.</p> <p>Coastal councils need encouragement, support and assistance to prevent inappropriate coastal development, with legislative backing where necessary.</p>
<p>Coastal population growth</p>	<p>The fast growth in coastal populations is overwhelming for some coastal councils who have not taken into consideration ecological sustainability or sea level rise when considering large numbers of development applications. They need to be able to cope with fast-moving coastal development by developing appropriate infrastructure, e.g. collective wastewater management systems and</p>

	stormwater management systems, instead of hundreds of new septic tanks potentially leaching into coastal habitats. Provision needs to be made for more environmentally friendly alternative approaches to stormwater management such as wetlands developments and aquifer storage and recovery schemes which may be quite land intensive.
3.	The impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with the climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise
Review current coastal developments	A review of current coastal developments is required, and those that are not ready for sea level rise are assisted by government to relocate or find alternative arrangements. This includes public assets and private recreational facilities.
Low lying salt pans and mangrove forests	Historically these areas have been treated as habitats of low value, but they may become our best asset in managing sea level rise. Many of these areas have been degraded through inappropriate uses. Their true potential as buffer zones needs to be examined. Mangrove forests in particular, are significant in mitigating storm impacts. With changes in frequency and intensity of storm and rain events likely (as an impact of climate change), they will be important in protecting land immediately behind them. The recent Burmese cyclone is a tragic example of how removal of mangroves exacerbated the extent of the cyclone with such disastrous consequences.
Coastal policy development	<p>There are major impacts predicted from climate change on ecological coastal communities and policy development is already lagging. Whilst there have been efforts in the past to look at coastal issues, published documents stipulating policies, etc., these need to be reviewed to reflect climate change implications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the time lag between Inquiry and Action. Definite policy direction is needed immediately. The continued 'bad' decisions of today will have even greater impact on the climatically changed environment of tomorrow. • Both state and local government departments need to take greater responsibility in refusing development in coastal areas, due to the need to plan now for areas of current and future open space provisions. There are many examples of development and applications currently with local councils and government that are going to be under threat from sea level rise. • A moratorium on any development (marinas, housing estates, golf courses, etc) in coastal zones across Australia, until the science can better assist the modelling of coastal change. • A precedent set in SA, within the last 6 months was the refusal of the development of a housing estate on the Yorke Peninsula based on the projected aspect of sea level rise. This precedent is important for the community, policy, planners and developers to fully understand the scope of decision making with climate change and sea level rises in mind.

<p>Tenure arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freehold land along the coast in vulnerable areas with high conservation value needs to be acquired to ensure the ability of coastal plant communities to adapt and change in a temporal and spatial context. • All leased government land along the coast needs to be subject to an audit to reveal the modelled response of climate change, coupled with other known threatening processes to come up with non-development zones. Development Applications should not just be approved if they comply with elevation requirements just because they have been built up, especially in known areas of high impact. There is more to the scenario than just elevation, there could be major change of current coastal features in some areas. • All crown land along the SA coastal line that can be included in protected areas should be. Generally, there is a strip of land between the low/high water mark and the current terrestrial land that is held by the Crown. The impact of the reduction of this land needs to be quantified.
<p>Ecological coastal communities</p>	<p>Immediate action must be taken to secure known coastal areas of high biodiversity value in protected areas, to contribute to the National Reserve System. In SA, this means very high priority areas such as Davenport Creek, near Ceduna on the West Coast, although there are many more examples.</p>
<p>Conservation planning</p>	<p>Immediate funding to allow for the evaluation of highest priority coastal areas for the restoration of productive land (for example, degraded through intensive cropping and/or grazing), so that there is a spatial availability of land under active restoration.</p> <p>Greater inclusion of NGO's and private biodiversity/environmental experts to be engaged in planning and action.</p> <p>Immediate assistance to conservation planners (not just within governments) to allow for better informed decision making.</p>
<p>Coorong and Lower Lakes</p>	<p>Immediate implementation of real and defined strategies to ensure the recovery of the Coorong and Lower Lakes, as well as accepted major conservation area along the SA coast. There is an urgent need to resolve the issue of environmental flows through the Murray Darling system and create a meaningful ecological impact to enable the system to recover.</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>Mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities</p>
<p>Partnerships and networking</p>	<p>Mechanisms to promote greater sustainability along the coast must necessarily involve many stakeholders and requires many different strategies, whether they be legislative, planning, monitoring, or revegetation. For this reason the process needs to develop better</p>

	alliances with all people and organisations involved and to promote greater co-ordination and information sharing.
Better coastal mapping	Coastal mapping (the actual known coastal boundary) has been, and continues to be, upgraded and this process should not be left to stagnate. Accurate digital mapping is essential. This dataset needs to have constant attention and commensurate funding.
DCDB	The Digital Cadastre Database needs to be constantly aligned with the coastline to ensure accuracy of boundaries. In this case there are many examples where the boundary of protected areas does not match the coast. Although legally it is described, spatially, using geographic information systems it appears very inconsistent in some places. For planning purposes this should be rectified in South Australia so that there is no discrepancy between the mapped coastal boundary and the cadastre.
Support coastal councils	Local councils responsible for fast-growing coastal communities need large amounts of support and incentives to prioritise and refocus their operations around ecologically sustainable development (ESD). Some of this support may come in the form of legislation, which is currently missing, especially with regard to development planning for coastal areas.
Support coast-sensitive planning	Planners, local councils, developers, architects and others quickly need strong guidelines about coast-sensitive planning

5.	Governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone
Commonwealth government	Greater synergistic co-ordination between Commonwealth government departments is required with regard to coastal zone management. Many departments are involved with different aspects of policy, planning and legislation, but these need to be much better co-ordinated – perhaps some kind of high level coastal expert reference or advisory group may assist with this.
Public assets	Planned response and action provided to the community for the loss of coastal assets, especially recreational facilities such as the Heysen Trail, camping areas, etc.
Local government	There needs to be a major effort by local councils to limit inappropriate use of coastal areas, such as recreational vehicles, unrestricted camping, vehicular access to beaches, etc. Appropriate legislation needs to empower local councils with the authority to do this.
Commonwealth coastal legislation	Commonwealth legislation that refers to generic coastal management, where relevant, is required. Relevant issues include restriction of vehicle access to particular coastal habitats, preservation of habitats such as mangrove forests and samphire wetlands in strategically important locations (to mitigate against storms and sea level rise) and limiting/restricting activities that cause coastal erosion and damage sensitive habitats/ ecosystems.

Coastal park management	All coastal parks should now implement no vehicle access policies or severely limit vehicle access to beach and dune areas to minimise coastal degradation. Clear messages must be sent to the community that coastal areas have huge biodiversity and community value and these are incompatible with destructive practices such as trail bike riding.
Coastal policy review	A review and update of coastal policy from all levels and agencies within government is required.