



Interim Sea Level Rise Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report concluded that...

“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level”

Climate change has begun to have measurable impacts on many communities, particularly in developing nations around the globe (WWF, 2008) and affecting a large number of people and ecosystems globally. Worldwide, policy makers are being forced to consider present and future climate change when making plans for the future. Australia faces a variety of climate change impacts and is particularly vulnerable to drought and increased frequency of extreme weather events (CSIRO 2006).

Council has commissioned a study aiming to evaluate the impacts and effects of climate change to the Waverley LGA in response to widespread concerns from both council and the community about climate change impacts. In addition, by being more well-informed of the potential impacts such as increased occurrence of storm events and sea level rise, Council will be better prepared to cope with these impacts with adaptive responses and plans.

The two policy options open to Council for responding to climate change include mitigation and adaptation. Council has already undertaken measures to mitigate climate change impacts by increasing the energy efficiency of Council property as well as within the community to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council. Waverley's goals and objectives in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) which contribute to climate change are outlined in Council's Environmental Action Plan 2 (EAP2) and aim to achieve a target of a 30% reduction in Council's GHG emissions by 2020 (based on 2003/2004 levels).

EAP 1 was adopted by Council in December 2008, with EAP2 designed to deliver a far greater depth of understanding around local issues and opportunities for maximising cost effective environmental management. Specifically, EAP2 and beyond is designed to quantify the potential contribution of individual actions and measures towards achieving overall targets.

Adaptation is the next logical step for Council to take in response to climate change. The purpose of adaptation is to prepare Council and the community for the inevitable changes to the climate that are, at this stage, unavoidable.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all coastal management activities carried out by staff, Councillors and volunteers of Waverley Council.



3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

NSW has an established framework for managing coastal hazards through the *NSW Coastal Policy 1997* and the *Coastal Protection Act 1979*.

In 1988 the NSW Government adopted the Coastline Hazard Policy with the primary objective of the Policy being *'to reduce the impact of coastal hazards on individual owners and occupiers, and to reduce private and public losses resulting from natural coastal forces'*.

The Coastline Management Manual was released in 1990 to provide information on coastal processes, hazards and coastline management measures to assist Councils in reaching balanced, merit-based decisions on development in the coastal zone. The Manual sets out a framework for the development of Coastline Management Plans whereby social, economic, recreational, aesthetic and ecological factors are considered along with coastal hazards and beach amenity requirements.

The *Coastal Protection Act 1979* includes requirements for Coastal Zone Management Plans, which must make provision for:

- protecting and preserving beach environments and beach amenity;
- emergency actions, such as works for the protection of property affected or likely to be affected by beach erosion as a result of storm activity; and
- ongoing and undiminished public access to beaches, headlands and waterways.

In acknowledgement of the coastal zone planning and management difficulties faced by local government in dealing with the medium to long term impacts of climate change, the NSW Government introduced a suite of strategic and land use planning measures during 2009.

A Draft Sea Level Rise Policy Statement was released for consultation in February 2009 and was subsequently finalised by the state government in October 2009; stating the sea level rise planning benchmarks to be an increase of 40cm by 2050 and 90cm by 2100 (based on 1990 mean sea levels).

In October 2009 the NSW Government introduced a coastal erosion reform package to better equip the state and local government with tools to help deal with the challenges that a rising sea level will present in the management of coastal hazards, particularly coastal erosion and long term coastal recession. As a part of this process, the state government have identified 11 coastal erosion 'hot spots' along the NSW coastline. Although no 'hotspots' have been identified within the Waverley region, there is still a great need for the development of measures to better prepare for the challenges faced by both the Waverley community and future Council planning processes and systems in regards to climate change and its impacts.

At the NSW Coastal Conference in November 2009, the NSW Government released for consultation the Draft NSW Coastal Planning Guideline: Adapting to Sea Level Rise, the Draft Coastal Risk Management Guide and the Draft Flood Risk Management Guide. The primary purpose of these documents is to provide guidance and assistance to local government when incorporating sea level rise into strategic and land use planning policies and planning instruments as well as when assessing development proposals for affected coastal lands.



Waverley Council is obliged to comply with the coastal zone management and emergency management requirements of the NSW Coastal Erosion Reform Package. This policy will aid Waverley Council in formally adopting the stated NSW sea level rise planning benchmarks of an increase of 40cm by 2050 and 90cm by 2100 (based on 1990 mean sea levels) and will commit Council to meet these requirements and to incorporate the necessary measures into Council's Development Control Plan (DCP).

4. PURPOSE

To provide the guiding principles for Council to manage climate change risks to natural and human systems within the Waverley Local Government Area using a combination of sustainable adaptation and mitigation measures. This will include community stakeholder consultation and aims to ensure the objectives outlined in this interim sea level rise policy are incorporated into strategic planning and decision making processes and operations of Council.

5. POLICY OBJECTIVES

To provide a strategic framework, that is consistent with a whole of government, and whole of Council approach, that will assist Council prepare for, and assist the community and environment to become more resilient and adaptable to, the impacts of Climate Change.

- To undertake adaptation and mitigation actions as a sustainable response to climate change. These actions would support the known environmental, economic, social and cultural values of the local community.
- To review climate change risks and impacts (for example, sea level rise, carbon emissions, increase in frequency and intensity of climatic events such as precipitation, storm and flood events) as further reliable information becomes available.
- To provide Council and its community with objective information that will assist in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- To continue to undertake research and to participate in opportunities that will improve the capacity in which Council manage climate change and it's predicted associated impacts.
- To comply with applicable legal requirements and implement any relevant state government policies, guidelines and/or directives.

6. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

Implementing this interim Policy will ensure Council considers and incorporates projected sea level rise benchmarks into:

- assessment and management of flood risk and coastal hazards;
- determining development applications;
- determining location and design life of essential assets and infrastructure;



- land use planning strategies to minimise or eliminate the risk of sea level rise on new and existing developments;
- planning and design of mitigation works to manage coastal hazards;
- management of natural assets such as coastal habitats, beaches and dunes and open coastal cliffs or bluffs.

7. WAVERLEY LGA MAP OF THE NSW SEA LEVEL RISE PLANNING BENCHMARKS FOR 2050 AND 2100

