Report on the Review of the State Coastal Management Plan
Foreword

Queensland’s 9500 km of coastline is a uniquely beautiful landscape, cherished by generations of locals and visitors. The coastal zone is currently home to more than 85 per cent of Queensland’s population, and has significant resources and environmental values that provide a foundation for the state’s economic and social development. These resources include a rich and diverse cultural heritage shaped by Traditional Indigenous peoples and historic events. Furthermore, our sandy beaches, abundant native wildlife, tropical rainforests, coastal wetlands and the world’s largest sand island and coral reef are natural gifts enjoyed by Queenslanders and tourists alike.

The State Coastal Management Plan – Queensland’s Coastal Policy commenced in February 2002 delivering a vision and direction to manage current and future pressures on Queensland’s sensitive coastal zone:

Queensland’s coast—the dynamic strip that straddles land and sea—is recognised as a precious part of our landscape, and government, industry and community work together to understand its natural systems, protect and rehabilitate important areas and ensure that our activities and settlements are sustainable.

At the time of its release the plan was considered an advanced approach to protecting and managing Queensland’s coastal zone—recognised in 2001 by the Royal Australian Planning Institute with a national award to the former Environmental Protection Agency for planning excellence. Since the plan commenced, pressures on the coast have increased and the planning context has changed substantially—particularly to accommodate significant population growth in south-east Queensland. Climate change has also become a more prominent issue—particularly in terms of potential sea level rise and the resulting threat of coastal inundation. Responding to these issues, a review of the State Coastal Management Plan commenced in 2007.

This report summarises information gathered during a formal consultation process conducted between January and March 2008. During the consultation process, stakeholders were asked to provide comments on the successes and shortfalls of the plan. Thank you for your contributions.

In addition to the formal consultation process, the department conducted an extensive assessment which involved internal and independent external analyses of specific coastal policy needs and broad coastal governance arrangements. The results of the review have convinced me that changes to the current coastal planning and management polices are warranted and a new coastal plan should be prepared. Changes to supporting legislative instruments are also needed. These changes will address issues raised during the review process by simplifying the coastal planning system; reducing overlap between coastal plans and other planning processes; and making more effective use of planning legislation.

In the near future I will be again requesting your input into the development of the new coastal plan for Queensland. If you would like to be involved, or find out more about the new plan, please visit the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) website at www.derm.qld.gov.au

Kate Jones
Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability
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Coastal planning in Queensland

The Queensland Government has a strong commitment to managing its coastal zone effectively. It has long recognised the need for specific legislation and statutory controls to protect the important ecological, social and economic values associated with the coast. The Queensland Government introduced the Coastal Protection and Management Act in 1995 (Coastal Act)—the legislative framework for achieving integrated coastal zone management in Queensland.

The Coastal Act requires that coastal management be achieved by coordinated and integrated planning and decision making including coastal management plans, coastal management districts and the use of other legislation. Integrated coastal zone management is regarded internationally as best practice in coastal management and focuses on maintaining, restoring or improving the quality of coastal zone ecosystems and resources through a holistic approach to management.

Under the Coastal Act, the State coastal plan is the primary instrument that describes State policies that will protect and manage Queensland’s coasts. The plan defines the State interests in the coastal zone and guides decision making about land use planning, development and natural resource management in the coastal zone.

The State Coastal Management Plan commenced in February 2002 and addresses issues such as population growth and economic development in the coastal zone. It also deals with issues such as loss of coastal resources, maintaining public access to beaches and ensuring that coastal development occurs in an appropriate place and way.

The plan contains 48 policies arranged under ten topic areas:

- coastal use and development
- physical coastal processes (the effects of waves, tides, currents and coastal storms)
- public access to the coast
- water quality
- Indigenous Traditional Owner cultural resources
- cultural heritage
- coastal landscapes
- conserving nature
- coordinated management
- research and information.

Coastal management outcomes, principles and policies that seek to protect and manage coastal resources and their values are set out for each of the ten topics. The coastal management outcomes reflect the desired state for the coastal zone relevant to each topic; the principles provide the direction on how the coastal management outcomes will be achieved; and the policies provide specific direction on the implementation of the principles.

The State coastal plan has the effect of a State planning policy (SPP) under the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA), which means that relevant parties must consider the State coastal plan when making or amending planning schemes and other government policy or legislation; when assessing development applications; and when designating land for community infrastructure.
On 26 January 2008, the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation, the Hon. Andrew McNamara publicly announced the review by asking Queenslanders to comment on the State Coastal Management Plan.

The public submission period closed on 31 March 2008. Opportunities were provided to lodge submissions through written or electronic formats. Respondents could provide comment via the department’s website or by completing submission forms that were available from the department’s regional offices and many local government customer service centres. In addition to collecting information from the general public, the Environmental Protection Agency—now the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM)—directly consulted with numerous peak interest groups.

Two external independent consultants were commissioned along with an extensive internal analysis which included an assessment of coastal policy needs; international best practice models; and the ability of existing Queensland policies and governance arrangements to achieve coastal management and protection outcomes. The collated results led the Coastal Protection Advisory Committee to advise the Minister to prepare a new Queensland Coastal Plan.

The location of individual submitters

Fifty-one per cent of respondents were from south-east Queensland, and the remainder of comments came from various coastal locations across the state.

Results of the consultation and discussion with stakeholders are presented here by topic areas as they appeared on the submission form.

- Effectiveness of the plan in protecting and managing the coast
- Interpreting and implementing the plan
- Developing and using coastal resources
- Recreation and tourism
- Conservation of coast
- Coastal hazards
- Cultural values
- Coastal protection and management responsibilities.

Table 1 Submissions by groups

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Consultation summary

Consultation on the State Coastal Management Plan revealed that Queenslanders identify closely with their coast. People are very concerned about; human impacts on the coastline; social and economic outcomes related to coastal communities; and the adverse impacts of climate change on communities, coastlines and wildlife.

Face-to-face meetings were held with people who work closely with the plan and understand the connections with planning processes and applicable State and local laws. The respondents requested a new document that was easier to interpret and that provided a guide that would result in a consistent approach to coastal planning and management.

The general message from most respondents is that the State Coastal Management Plan is ready for a revision.

Effectiveness of the plan in protecting and managing the coast

Respondents were asked to indicate how effective they thought the plan was in protecting and managing the coast. Analysis revealed that:

- 64% felt the plan had little protection and management value for the coast.
- 21% felt it was mostly effective.
- 15% had no opinion
- nobody thought the plan was fully effective.

Respondents to this question called for collaborative decision-making between state and local government, and funding to help councils and coastal management groups implement the plan and its objectives. Comments were consistently expressed throughout the consultation that effective implementation of the plan has been limited by low resourcing capacity within local government. Respondents also highlighted the need to equip local government with the capacity to effectively manage and protect the coast.

Another common response to this question concerned duplication and overlap between policies of the State Coastal Management Plan and other planning systems. Duplication and overlap led to confusion and uncertainty in implementing the plan. Some respondents suggested that a revised coastal plan should provide cross-references to the relevant implementation mechanisms. Policy integration was suggested as the key to removing duplication.

See Topic 6 Coastal protection and management for further comments regarding effectiveness of the plan.

Interpreting and implementing the plan

Respondents were asked to indicate how easy it was to interpret and apply the State Coastal Management Plan. Analysis revealed:

- 35% considered the plan to be workable or better
- 40% considered it to be hard or very hard to implement and apply
- 25% recorded no opinion.
People frequently commented that effective implementation of the State Coastal Management Plan has been limited by a number of factors. These included the capacity of local governments to implement policy when they were, in many cases, already under-resourced and ‘stretched to the limit’. A shortfall in professional expertise in coastal matters and a lack of supporting materials such as maps and other data sets were also considered a barrier to effective implementation.

The plan was difficult for respondents to interpret due to a perceived lack of clarity about the desired outcomes and complicated development application triggers, as well as confusion about the roles and responsibilities for implementing the various policies. Feedback indicated that implementation could be improved by means of state government guidance, assistance in professional development and clarification of department roles. Respondents cited examples of how the broad policy directions of the plan were open to individual interpretation which led to inconsistencies in decision making at the local and regional level. This was a point of frustration for various industry, government and interest groups. A further suggestion to improve consistency in policy application was for the coastal plan to be implemented through regional plans under the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA), as well as through a State planning policy.

Other suggestions arising from consultation included: separation of planning objectives from the policies by preparing two separate documents; formatting policies as codes to assist with implementation and the provision of implementation guides; and detailed mapping for each section of the revised plan and policies.

**Specific coastal issues**

Submission forms provided the opportunity for respondents to make comments on specific coastal issues. Six topic areas with a number of sub-topics broadly followed the structure of the State Coastal Management Plan. Respondents using submission forms elaborated on issues through free-text fields. Comments from other submitters were allocated to each respective topic.
Topic 1
Development and use of coastal resources

Respondents provided comments on nine subtopics that included:

- urban development in coastal areas
- canal estates
- private and commercial use of waterfront areas
- maritime industry and ports
- reclaiming land for development
- mining and quarrying offshore or onshore
- aquaculture—land or sea based
- rural land use
- commercial fishing.

The subtopic of greatest response from individuals was urban development on the coast. Given the high rate of population growth and associated development to accommodate this growth especially in south-east Queensland, it was not surprising that so many comments focused on this.

Urban development in coastal areas

There was an identified need for settlement pattern policies to be ‘tightened’ and supported with mapping of ‘go’ and ‘no go’ areas for development. Respondents suggested that within developing areas, the requirements for expansion of existing infrastructure needed to be taken into account. It was noted that increased demands for urban infrastructure caused environmental impacts and visual amenity issues. Responses included the recognised need to build well back from the foreshore.

It was noted that the regulation of urban development is not a coastal issue and should be addressed as an IPA principle. There was some support for the use of statutory IPA regional plans and the discontinuation of regional coastal management plans due to duplication—mentioned in previous responses.

Concerns were raised that development, particularly urban development, continues to be approved in locations often inconsistent with local government planning schemes and in natural hazard areas. A number of respondents commented that urban sprawl should be restricted and that dwellings and services should be concentrated even though this may put pressure on limited local area resources.

It was acknowledged by submitters that existing urban areas required management frameworks rather than restriction of development. Respondents felt that the principles of ecologically sustainable development (noted in the plan) needed to be incorporated into developments rather than ignored, as many felt was currently the case.

Canal estates

Many of the respondents who commented on residential canal estates supported greater means for prohibition of these developments. Residential canal estates were not supported due to the potential impacts of sea level rise and environmental harm. Individual respondents also commented that canal-style developments may also adversely impact on water quality. Disturbance to marine habitats and fauna where canal estates are developed and the destruction of flora to make way for development were key concerns. Respondents expressed the desire to remove the ‘loophole’ whereby canal estates are not assessed as such if they are connected to tidal waters through a lock and weir system.

Private and commercial use of waterfront areas

Community benefits associated with access to waterfront areas was an important issue for individual respondents, who were universally against privatisation of these areas. Of most concern was the issue of privatisation of land restricting public access to the waterfront. It was acknowledged by respondents that public open space should be available along the waterfront, and its area should be sufficient to meet demand. It was noted that commercial activity on the waterfront should be appropriately sited and controlled.
Comments to this effect included suggestions for a new coastal policy that would allow public access while preserving a ‘local’ feel to waterfront areas.

Respondents linked intensive private and commercial boat access to disturbances to coastal habitat and coastal fauna breeding areas. Submitters stated the need for greater enforcement powers to restrict property owners from expanding onto State-owned land due to the inherent inequity of this and potential reduction in public access.

**Maritime industry and ports**

Respondents voiced the opinion that the existing coastal plan is inadequate to meet the growing demand for maritime industry. Marine-based tourism and fishing was also acknowledged as a contributor to growing demand, especially for boating facilities. A careful and balanced approach to coastal-dependent maritime development was called for with a consistent, whole-of-government approach to marine infrastructure planning and location that avoided adverse environmental impacts.

**Reclaiming land for development**

Land reclamation for residential development was not supported by most respondents. A considerable number of people voiced concerns about the effect of sea level rise on developments built on potentially unstable reclaimed land, and the impacts of this practice on the environment and people’s lives. Examples cited included impacts on marine habitats and ecosystems, specifically the destruction of mangroves, swamps and wetland areas necessary for maintaining water quality and essential coastal processes. There was concern that local governments, while responsible for approving and monitoring development activities, may be doing so with limited resources and expertise.

Respondents considered that waterfront development on reclaimed land creates more privatisation of the waterfront and loss of local access for public recreational activities such as swimming. However, one respondent suggested that reclamation also enabled opportunities for commercial and public structures and facilities that support the development of sustainable local communities, regional economic growth and the protection of significant coastal sites.

Respondents reported that consideration of projects involving filling of land below the highest astronomical tide (HAT) were complicated by inconsistent definitions of ‘reclaimed land’ within the Coastal Act and the State’s coastal plan. There was a call for such definitions to be standardised.

**Mining and quarrying offshore or onshore**

Many of the comments relating to this issue focussed on policy shortfalls. Comments included that current policies in the existing coastal plan do not specify appropriate sites, sustainable quotas, monitoring and restoration guidelines. Additionally, inconsistencies were mentioned—for example, State allocated resource extraction zones in coastal areas were adjacent to significant (Ramsar) listed wetlands.

Respondents were unanimous in concern for the environmental effects of mining and quarrying activities. They expressed a desire for regulation to minimise impacts on water quality, erosion and coastal visual aesthetics. Comments regarding sand extraction were also captured within this response set. There was support for a policy revision and greater control of sand extraction in a revised coastal plan.
Aquaculture Land or sea-based

Aquaculture (especially land-based aquaculture) in coastal areas was considered acceptable as long as there was regulation of the industry (which is already in place) and greater policy direction. There were numerous requests for environmental monitoring to be included into policy that would avoid the environmental impacts of nutrient run-off from land-based aquaculture. There was also some concern expressed about potential escape of farmed fish stock to wild populations in marine-based facilities and how the plan might limit this possibility. It was stated that commercial fish farming as a possible future direction for commercial fishing should be regulated, area specific and isolated from recreational fishing sites.

Rural land use

Submitters commonly commented that the impacts of rural land use activities were difficult to assess. Some respondents suggested that these impacts and uses be dealt with via best practice management guidelines as opposed to planning and regulatory instruments.

Commercial fishing

Submitters requested that regularly updated commercial fishing quotas and limits be monitored and enforced.
**Topic 2**

**Recreation and tourism**

Respondents provided comments on six subtopics that included:

- boat launch and storage facilities
- recreational activities and facilities
- tourism use
- public access
- driving on beaches and dunes
- recreational fishing.

Driving vehicles on dunes and beaches elicited some of the more passionate responses to this topic area. However, maintaining public access to the coast—relating to recreational activities such as walking, swimming and fishing—were also keenly promoted.

**Boat launch and storage facilities**

Responses indicated that the growth in demand for boat access and storage facilities outstripped supply in some areas. Some form of management of future development of facilities was requested that would avoid indiscriminate launching and berthing and consequent environmental impacts.

Respondents varied in their interpretations of the value of these boat launch and storage facilities. On one hand, public boat ramps or public pontoons and jetties were recognised for their contribution to maintaining or providing public access. The opposite view considered private pontoons and jetties to be eroding public access to the coast and negatively impacting on scenic amenity.

Notably, several respondents questioned whether these facilities should be dealt with via coastal policies at all.

**Recreational activities and facilities**

It was recognised that recreational pursuits on the coast were an important part of the lifestyle of Queenslanders. Respondents requested that as a priority, the wilderness and natural amenity values of the coastal zone should be protected for nature-based recreation and tourism activities. It was also stated that the consequences of a loss of marine recreational assets include far-reaching affects on the health and wellbeing of a community.

The existing coastal plan was criticised for having vague and inadequate definitions relating to recreational activities and facilities. Respondents called for consideration of the human demands for natural and constructed facilities that provide recreational amenity. Some respondents mentioned that the plan provides little guidance on appropriately managing and developing public spaces to provide enhanced recreational opportunities.

A number of additional issues were mentioned.

- There was a fear that access to recreational fishing sites would be restricted due to coastal development.
- Activities such as jet-skiing and boating were considered particularly prone to causing environmental problems (e.g. bank stability and erosion); limiting public access; and creating safety issues.
- Camping should be limited and controlled within designated areas to protect the coastal zone.
- Repeated comments raised the need for buffer zones to be maintained or implemented between developed sites and beaches to maintain public access and amenity.
Tourism use

Respondents recognised that tourism was very important for Queensland. There was a strong feeling that tourism should be ‘eco-friendly’ and regulated, through quotas in sensitive areas, to minimise adverse environmental impacts and preserve the benefits for future generations. Large and exclusive tourism developments were frowned upon where they were solely for economic gain and impacted adversely on the environment and social structure in communities. Some respondents commented that tourism, while important to an area’s economy should be kept in balance, and should never come at the expense of the wellbeing of a community.

Monitoring, research and management were considered necessary in order to strike a balance between protection of biodiversity values and providing positive tourism experiences.

Other comments included a widely held appreciation of Indigenous Traditional Owner rights in relation to the coast and coastal resources.

Public access

Submissions indicated that the use of, and access to, the coastal environment is a significant societal and cultural factor which should be protected by the coastal plan. Respondents expressed the desire for public access to beaches and coastal waters to be maintained, protected and enhanced while providing for the operation of infrastructure of State significance and protection of natural and cultural coastal resources.

There were a significant number of comments claiming that private development limited public access to the coast and coastal waters. High levels of support were given to maintaining and expanding public access via the State Coastal Management Plan, but with regard for the environment and the fragility and changing nature of beach and dune systems.

The existing plan was criticised for having a generally poor understanding of the economic, social and cultural values of the coast. For example, it was pointed out that the plan does not adequately reflect the importance and value of our social, cultural and spiritual relationship to the coast nor how this relationship may be used to improve coastal stewardship.

Driving on beaches and dunes

This was an issue that elicited a significant 24 per cent response rate from those responding via electronic and paper-based forms. In all cases, respondents were supportive of limiting vehicle use on beaches. Suggestions ranged from completely prohibiting all vehicles from beaches (other than emergency vehicles) and especially from beaches that were ecologically sensitive (e.g. turtle breeding areas and bird habitat) to enforcing strict speed limitations and quotas for private vehicle access. It was considered by some that recreational vehicle usage on beaches needed to be managed consistently by one authority.

Recreational fishing

Many respondents considered that the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (now the Department Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) was successfully regulating recreational fishing and the need for a policy in a new plan was questioned by some. Other views on recreational fishing ranged from prohibiting recreational fishing as it interrupted commercial fishing and viable fish populations, to allowing recreational fishing with an appropriate management licensing system.
**Topic 3**
**Conservation of coast**

Respondents provided comments on four subtopics that covered:

- areas of conservation significance
- dune conservation
- water quality
- scenic coastal landscapes.

**Areas of conservation significance**

Policies relating to areas of conservation significance were reported by respondents as requiring significant review. Comments included:

- There are no mechanisms to regulate ongoing management and rehabilitation activities after project completion.
- The current plans policies have had limited success in preventing major developments impacting on areas of conservation significance.
- Greater guidance is needed to effectively manage significant areas.
- Better mapping is needed to support development assessment and land use planning decisions.
- The impacts of climate change on biological diversity and species habitats are poorly considered in current policies.
- An expansion of ‘areas of State significance’ was a popular theme in responses with a variety of low-impact recreational activities suggested in these areas to preserve natural values.

There was a high level of support for more deliberative rulings against development. These would be supported by definitive policy and legislative protection for areas of conservation significance. Better mapping resources were offered as suggestions for assisting in delivery of biodiversity planning. The value of using the latest scanning and mapping technology to capture habitats of less than ten hectares was noted as important for connectivity, migratory species and turtle nesting.

**Dune conservation**

The access to and use of dunes and beaches was seen as an important issue by all respondents. They wished to see dunes preserved and protected from pressures such as development, population growth and climate change. Some suggested that dunes be ‘no-go’ zones. Approvals for building on and excavation of coastal dunes were of considerable concern, particularly where these impacted on natural coastal and ecosystem processes and dune vegetation. Coastal resource management groups requested that the reviewed coastal plan better support the (voluntary, community) work carried out in the face of public and development pressures that erode natural resources.

**Water quality**

All respondents to this subtopic were concerned about poor water quality. Water quality along the coast was perceived to affect public use and coastal amenity. Sewerage outfalls and the regulation of waste-water discharge were key concerns and respondents wished to see evidence of water quality monitoring. Solutions to poor water quality put forward by a number of respondents included:

- protecting vegetation along waterways
- developing an environmental planning policy to establish environmental values and water quality objectives for coastal reaches of creeks
- consulting community to raise awareness of statutory responsibilities of local governments.
Where water quality issues are sufficiently addressed in other policies, respondents suggested that the coastal plan should refer to these policies.

**Scenic coastal landscapes**

Although amenity impacts are a jurisdictional matter to be addressed by local government, respondents felt that guidance and policy direction is still required from the state. The existing coastal plan was considered ineffective in preventing the destruction of coastal landscapes by development. A perceived plan weakness allowed scenic amenity issues to be ignored by local governments in making planning decisions. In several responses, residents described taking preventive action to preserve local scenic landscapes in their areas in the face of development assessments.

Local council development approvals that allowed building to occur on steep coastlines reduced scenic values, according to several respondents. A higher level of enforcement was called for to protect coastal areas. Continued urban, infrastructure and agricultural development was considered to have ongoing detrimental impacts on scenic amenity and was impacting on the ‘sense of place’ for people in many coastal towns and villages.

Respondents requested a redefinition of ‘coastal landscapes’ and ‘scenic coastal landscapes’. They also suggested a standard be developed to measure impacts on coastal landscapes.
**Topic 4**
**Coastal hazards**

Coastal hazards include events such as storm tides, cyclone effects, erosion, sea level rise and flooding from upstream water sources. Respondents provided comments on three subtopics that covered:

- climate change
- tidal inundation from storms and sea level rise
- coastal erosion.

**Climate change**

All respondents to this subtopic recognised the potential long-term impacts of climate change and the need to address the inherent challenges climate change presented. Among all responses was a concern that the current policies dealing with coastal hazards and climate change were not being implemented. Climate change was noted as posing an increasing threat to the coastal zone, yet infrastructure and development approvals were seen as continuing even though some were well within expected inundation zones. Respondents suggested that in a revised coastal plan, climate change should be the main focus of the revision with every section providing advice on mitigating, avoiding or minimising the adverse impacts of climate change.

Greater certainty and clarity was called for in implementing the policies. This was in part conceived through research to determine climate change vulnerability and the coordination and implementation of policy at State level. Several submissions called for climate change policy to specifically address erosion prone areas.

**Tidal inundation from storms and sea level rise**

Development in flood-prone and storm surge areas was of high concern to respondents. Respondents considered that development in these areas exacerbated risks and compromised low-lying landscapes. Up-to-date modelling, mapping, use of storm surge gauges, and a pooling of resources including greater support, direction and funding, were considered necessary tools for delivering the best outcomes for coastal communities.

Numerous respondents mentioned that development control policies and wording such as ‘avoid’ and ‘planned retreat’ used within the plan must be supported by specific risk-mapping and transparent criteria for local government to successfully refuse unsustainable coastal development.

**Coastal erosion**

Responses indicated a lack of confidence in erosion mitigation measures. There was a perceived need for greater action to deal with coastal erosive processes. As a counter-point to this, a number of respondents believed that natural processes should be allowed to run their course and that where development occurred within erosion prone areas owners and councils should endure the consequences.

People also noted that the existing coastal plan does not take into full consideration the different coastal environments (wave or tidal dominated systems). They commented that the default erosion prone area was not entirely applicable in rivers and estuaries where the erosion is influenced by channel meandering.

Suggestions for a revised plan included the following:

- Policies should be strengthened to ensure no development occurs within erosion-prone areas.
- The local development of shoreline erosion management plans for erosion hot spots should be mandatory, with greater interdisciplinary oversight.
- The determination and mapping of erosion prone areas needs to be updated.
Topic 5
Cultural values

Respondents provided comments on two subtopics that covered:

- Indigenous heritage and Traditional ownership
- built heritage

Indigenous heritage and Traditional ownership

Some respondents felt that the coastal plan does not adequately address either the existing rights and interests or the aspirations of Indigenous people. Others identified that current policies are outdated as recent legislation and policy developments have overtaken the role of the coastal plan in many respects.

Responses called for consultation processes and management of the coastal resources to involve Traditional Owners, stating that the revised policy should reflect their interests. Mapping of Indigenous knowledge and resources was also suggested because, 'Indigenous heritage needs to be respected and protected'.

Built heritage

Respondents felt that places, buildings and objects located on the coast have important cultural heritage values and should be identified, valued and conserved using processes that consult the community. People suggested that heritage should be protected and retained in the face of development and that in a revised coastal plan, links should be provided to other legislative and policy mechanisms for recognising cultural and built heritage values.

However, it was also identified that recent developments in cultural heritage policy would probably result in duplication or overlap.
Topic 6
Coastal protection and management responsibilities

Respondents provided comments on four subtopics that covered:

- coastal planning
- development assessment
- management of coastal reserves
- science, information and education.

Coastal planning

A common theme among respondents was the lack of policy integration between state and local governments and between government agencies. Some considered that the State Coastal Management Plan had not been successfully integrated into local government planning schemes, rendering it to some extent ineffective. They felt that there was a lack of human resources, knowledge and understanding within local government which led to poor implementation of the plan.

On the topic of integration, respondents suggested natural resource management-related policies should link with other government policies including a link to the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Furthermore, it was stated that coastal issues were not as well articulated and supported as they could have been at a state level.

Respondents expressed support for greater legislative powers to protect sensitive coastal areas, especially from development pressures. Respondents suggested that the plan be elevated in status under IPA and compliance made mandatory, with penalties imposed for non-compliance. Accordingly, the plan should ideally include efficient enforcement measures that are spelt out clearly and applied fairly.

There was consistent support from many sectors to incorporate coastal policies into IPA regional planning frameworks and set ‘go’ and ‘no go’ areas for future development. Some support was voiced for regional coastal management plans where they were not already in existence, as they were thought to provide more certain strategic planning for regions.

Respondents requested more active involvement by the Queensland Government to develop shoreline management plans for local government. Management plans for the coastal zone were considered to be the most effective process if undertaken by the Queensland Government in conjunction with local government and other relevant stakeholders.

In relation to coastal management districts, respondents suggested several times that under the Coastal Act, coastal management districts can have a much wider application and that serious attention should be given to how they might be used to better achieve coastal management goals, especially in developed areas. Numerous respondents requested coastal management districts be referenced to cadastral features (property boundaries) and that the maps be made freely available.

Repeatedly throughout the consultation, respondents identified the need for more Queensland-specific research on which to base planning information and guidelines. In conjunction with this, in-house and local government officer knowledge of coastal planning and management issues was seen to be an ongoing concern that the Queensland Government needs to address. One response revealed that local government officers often lacked necessary expertise and capacity to
provide full consideration of coastal processes and ecosystems, indicating a need for training and development.

Respondents made the suggestion of creating a permanent secretariat or board to assist state and local governments to develop and implement coastal plans. Some respondents perceived that increased Queensland Government resources were needed to properly deliver the plan.

**Development assessment**

Many respondents commented about the inadequacy of the existing coastal plan in guiding and streamlining development assessment. The following reasons were given.

- The coastal plan is difficult to interpret.
- There are inconsistencies between government agencies.
- There are contradictions in policy.
- Assessment procedures are overly restrictive (for the provision of essential maritime services and infrastructure).
- There are no clear and transparent risk criteria for assessment officers to apply in the approvals process.

Respondents stated a need for climate change to be considered in the coastal plan as they felt its effects would impact upon development especially in erosion prone areas unless Queensland’s coastal plan encouraged particular consideration of this in development assessment.

Solutions offered in responses to address approval delays involved: greater public consultation in the approvals process; the reintroduction of government-driven assessment; and more highly trained and interdisciplinary planners in local government.

It was also noted that local knowledge and expert scientific input (of coastal processes and science) also helped in effecting better assessment decisions and outcomes.

**Management of coastal reserves**

Many respondents viewed the management of coastal reserves as a priority area that was not currently being managed adequately nor consistently.

Respondents suggested that the breadth of coastal issues is not limited to Queensland Government responsibilities, but that there were additional responsibilities and expertise for critical issues. These include land use and social planning, transportation and economic development, vegetation management, cultural heritage and landscape amenity. Respondents desired better integration between departments and organisations that have coastal planning, management and protection roles.

Respondents reported that guidance and policy direction for effective management of public coastal land was found to be lacking. Management of the coastal reserve was considered by most respondents to be the responsibility of local government which, in each case mentioned, was considered lacking in the capacity to manage the reserves within their jurisdiction. Councils were also criticised for conflicting management priorities. A cited example was the removal of coastal vegetation to provide visual amenity for developments.
Science, information and education

Responses on this sub-topic focused around two key themes — department-focused initiatives and public initiatives. The government departments responsible for coastal planning and management were asked to increase efforts to provide effective education and awareness services especially with regard to coastal hazards and climate change. Respondents commented that current policies are not informed by up-to-date science and that there needs to be a systemic learning and capacity-building program for regional officers, local government assessors and key stakeholders. The significant geographical and environmental variations across Queensland meant that specialist skills were required for staff working across a range of areas. Respondents also suggested that university research partners could prove a significant resource for the Queensland Government in proactively addressing climate change and other coastal management issues.

Respondents discussed the potential for up-to-date and accurate on-line mapping relating to coastal management districts and mapping of coastal zones to reduce ambiguity and provide a useful, accurate resource on which to base assessments and approvals. One respondent suggested that this would allow for the introduction of a statutory instrument that ‘locked in’ coastal mapping similar to that of the property maps under the Vegetation Management Act 1999. Regular updates on coastal legislation changes and information was considered important for officers and the public.

Many respondents on this topic spoke about the need for more public education relating to coastal issues. Some recommended childhood education about coastal care, fishing programs and related issues. Most respondents felt that environmental awareness and values- development were linked to public education surrounding natural area values, human-ecological relationships and climate change. There was a perceived lack of knowledge and awareness in the public sphere about the coast and its issues that public education could address. The general feeling was that a sound educational program, while requiring an initial outlay of funds, will save money in the long term by creating a motivated and engaged public.

Many identified an increase in funding as a key driver for greater research opportunities that would support coastal care and management programs, both at a general level and at specific sites along the coast. Areas where research was identified by respondents included:

- ongoing monitoring of coastal changes and measures undertaken to protect the coast
- science education and research to provide policy support on protection, management and conservation of the coastal zone.
Where to from here?

Consultation has indicated that the coastal plan requires reform to become an affective tool to address coastal planning, management and rehabilitation issues. As a result, a new Queensland Coastal Plan has been drafted. Along with the new plan, amendments to the supporting legislative framework are being made. This will ensure the regime that protects coastal resources is effective and efficient.

Based on the results of the review, the following five criteria have been adopted as guiding principles for drafting the new plan.

- greater policy certainty to provide consistency in outcomes
- greater certainty in relation to coastal hazards and their management
- improved natural resource management
- better integration with other planning, development and natural resource management instruments
- simplification of the plan and removal of duplication and overlap.

A final version of the new Queensland Coastal Plan will be prepared after comments on the draft have been considered.
Have your say on the new Draft Queensland Coastal Plan

All Queenslander’s are invited to help shape the future of coastal planning and management by providing feedback on the Draft Queensland Coastal Plan. Everyone is welcome to make a submission, either as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.

The Draft Queensland Coastal Plan and instructions on how to make a submission are available at www.derm.qld.gov.au/coastalplan

For further information about this report or the Queensland Coastal Plan, please email coastal.support@derm.qld.gov.au