



Submission to the Productivity Commission on “Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation”

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission.

Our submission is confined to comments around the coastal zone and we would be happy to expand on any matters that we raise here in more detail if you wish.

Once we are dealing with adaptations to climate change in the coastal zone (coastal land and coastal/near-shore waters) matters become immediately embroiled in consideration of institutional arrangements and under which level of government any adaptation response falls.

The levels of governance concerned with coastal zone adaptation include:

National: although the Commonwealth has little direct constitutional role clearly as the major revenue collector it has considerable control over the funds which may be available for adaptation programs. As well it has played an increasing (advisory) role through the Climate Change and Coastal Commissions.

Supra-State: bodies such as the Murray Darling Basin Authority cross state borders but have major impacts on coastal – marine systems through controlling the amount of fresh water and its quality which enters the coastal zone

State and Territory Governments: with their prime jurisdiction over the coastal zone dominate coastal planning and management (and hence adaptation to climate change) in Australia. The mere fact that this introduces eight governments makes a complex matter more complicated.

Regional (sub-state) bodies: these are either catchment management authorities, or their equivalents, regional coastal boards in states such as Victoria, or a suite of river or water authorities which control the quantity and quality of water entering the coastal zone (including estuaries)

Local Government: the role and power of local government in coastal matters varies considerably across the states and territories (much more significant for example in Queensland than in Victoria) but this is where a considerable portion of local statutory planning occurs and local councils are often the builders and maintainers of considerable coastal infrastructure which will be severely influenced by climate change on the coast

Sub Local Council: although again there is considerable variation across the nation in some States Committees of Management or their equivalent are delegated decision-makers in heavily used foreshore areas that will be severely impacted by climate change.

The consequences of such a bevy of governmental involvement and its impact on climate change adaptation on the coast was of course covered in considerable detail in the House of Representatives “The Time to Act is Now” report to which our Society (and a number of our senior members) made substantial submissions and contributions (see final report). Suffice to say in regard to these matters the Society’s overall succinct view of the outcome of this work is best summarised in the one page policy statement we presented to all major political parties prior to the last election (produced in July 2010).

The main points in our policy are:

Formulate a **National Coastal Policy** in consultation with states, territories and local governments through COAG to be supported by an **Intergovernmental Agreement on Coasts**. The agreement would identify the national need for information and investment in public infrastructure (including those concerned with adaptation to climate change)

Establish a **National Coastal Information System** - similar to NOAA in the USA. This will sustain R and D in coastal biophysical and social science and in the development of user oriented decision making. This would include databases on local government information on risk to the adverse impacts of climate change and in communicating national adaptation options to communities, the professions and businesses.

To accomplish the above it is necessary to form a **National Coastal Commission** under a national **Coastal Commission Act** to review the effectiveness of investment actions in coastal planning and management including the infrastructure of local government and to provide advice to all levels of government on initiatives to secure adaptation and improved management of coastal ecosystems, infrastructure, social welfare needs and regional economies.

Some of the other issues you may wish to consider in your review might include:

Who would pay for coastal adaptation works? The Commonwealth has no jurisdiction but does possess considerable revenue raising powers. Local Government owns much of the infrastructure that will need enhancement but has only a limited rating base. How should the cost of adaptation be shared inside local council areas?

This was an issue raised in a very recent study that has just been published (Sally and Wescott, 2011) which is attached. Should inland rate payers who do not get the property value benefits of being close to the coast cross subsidise coastal dwellers in the same LGA?

The impact in terms of equity on loss of coastal areas. (e.g. foreshore camping is one of the cheapest and least expensive holidays available to people). Hence if foreshore areas are lost to either erosion or to works installed to protect private property where will people who can only afford these foreshore camping experiences then holiday and recreate? A major parliamentary report in Victoria in the mid 2000s raised these and other issues (the current Shadow Minister for Environment in Victoria, Ms Lisa Neville chaired that inquiry).

I would also suggest (although this is not official ACS policy) that you study the history of the Marine and Coastal Community Network which built up in the 1990s and 2000s over 10,000 participants from all sectors across Australia and acted as an 'honest- broker' and communicator of information from third sources, without prejudice.

I have always thought that the MCCN would be a sound model on which to base a Community Climate Adaptation Network which would communicate and network with information to local communities on their options for adaptation. It has been my experience that local communities react badly to Government officials telling them about climate change and adaptation (particularly in public fora – you could call it the Murray Darling Basin phenomenon) – an 'honest broker' independent of government is required. See again Sally and Wescott (2011) attached.

The ACS is committed to enhancing the biophysical and social aspects of our coastline and we would be happy to expand on any of these topics further if you wish.

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