

Coastal Zone Management and Planning

Foreword:

Unfortunately I only became aware of the opportunity to make submissions to this important project this week and have been otherwise engaged on undertakings as I depart today for 2 weeks (till the 17th June). Colleagues have, however, encouraged me to become engaged in the project. I therefore have skimmed through the report and support its general thrust as it is in line with the position I have been seeking to promote in recent years. Current time constraints mean that I have to limit my submission to a few general comments but I have attached a number of my recent, relevant, publications on the subject. These publications have all been peer reviewed by competent referees and have their relevant publication/presentation details shown in the header.

I would be pleased to address the Commission so as to expand on my submission, discuss elements of the current Project Report in more detail, and answer any questions. I will be available from 18th June until 7th July and then from 1st October. In between these times I can be contacted by email but will be out of radio range for much of the time so there may be some delay in reply (ocean yacht cruising).

Submission:

Climate change has been with us for millennia however we haven't really understood this and, whether climate change has either anthropogenic or natural causes, we need to recognise the uncertainty of the future and simply build that in to the way we operate as a society (to use the colloquial expression: "suck it up"). The best way to do so is through a change in basic philosophy to one of adaption. Practical means of adaption in regard to the coastal, estuary and river zones are illustrated in my attached papers "Canute's Dilemma" and "Disposable Infrastructure including Relocatable Buildings - adapting to Climate Change". These two papers not only address the implications of climate change for coastal and riverine development but also offer practical, and sometimes novel, solutions.

Much of the current legislation throughout Australia is based on traditional approaches to managing coastal and riverine development. In an uncertain climate future much of this legislation is no longer appropriate. Further, it has tended to have been recently shaped into sometimes draconian prohibitions which reflect a defensive reaction to uncertainty rather than a recognition of the need for a basic change in approach. The recent changes to the NSW Coastal Act is a case in point. Attached are two of my papers illustrating and criticising the inappropriate reaction of a conservative approach to dealing with climate change: "Coastal Mismanagement - NSW a suitable case for treatment" and "NSW Coastal Act - A disaster waiting to happen".

In addition, some of the "knee jerk" reactions by bureaucrats in advising Elected representatives have produced unworkable "solutions" that appear to look reasonable but in fact will only result in economic, social and environmental distress. This is best currently highlighted by the demonstrably ridiculous "Emergency Measures" which were introduced into the 2010 changes to the NSW Coastal Act. The foolish and unprofessional nature of these measures are illustrated in the above mentioned paper "Coastal Mismanagement..." and

in a paper I assisted colleagues in preparing " Permissible Emergency Coastal Protection Works in NSW - A Coastal Engineering Perspective" , also attached.

Insurance has proved itself overseas, particularly in the USA to not only be ineffective and costly but it also encourages unwise forms of development. Unfortunately there is not the time to expand on this here however I have been asked to present a paper on this matter to an Insurance Conference at the end of August.

Thank You for the opportunity to make this submission.

Angus Gordon, BE, M.Eng Sc., FIE (Aust), CP Eng.

Some background on the author:

Completing a Civil Engineering degree in 1969 I commenced work on water and coastal projects in 1970. In 1973 I obtained a Master of Engineering Science. For 40 years I have been involved in coastal engineering, coastal zone management and planning projects in all states of Australia and in Brunei, Dubai, Kuwait, Indonesia and Hong Kong. I was also engaged by the UN as an international expert and have represented Australia at the UN IPCC.

In 1976 I established the NSW Governments Beach Improvement Program and led the team that, in 1978 produced NSW's first comprehensive costal investigation and management study the "Byron Bay – Hastings Point Erosion Study. As a direct result of that study I then became involved in the drafting and implementation of the 1979 NSW Coastal Protection Act.

I have 53 technical papers published nationally and internationally on coastal engineering and coastal zone management.

First becoming involved in the issue of climate change in 1976, I was seconded to the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science for a 12 month period. In 1987 I published a paper as a chapter in the CSIRO's book "Greenhouse 87"; the paper linked sea level rise to coastal erosion at 32 locations in NSW where my team had undertaken studies over the preceding decade. I have published a number of papers on climate change and was the lead author of the Engineers Australia 1991 guidelines for adaption to climate change in the coastal zone and have recently been engaged by Engineers Australia on a further publication focussing on adaption to climate change.

For 9 years prior to his retirement I was General Manager of Pittwater Council, on Sydney's Northern Beaches. I was a Keynote Speaker at the first Australian Conference on Practical Adaption to Climate Change and am currently Chairman of the Industry Advisory Board to the University of NSW's Water Research Centre.