

IN THE NEVER-NEVER – ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN ADAPTIVE CHOICES IN A CHANGING COASTAL LANDSCAPE

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1.0 Introduction

The concept of a 'never-never' land - a utopian dreamland, a place to run away to, not threatened by change, was first made famous by JM Barrie and Peter Pan in the late nineteenth century. In many ways, the coast sits in the Australian psyche as a never-never land. It's the place of never ending summer holidays, with days of warm sunshine, swimming, fishing and relaxing, stretching off into the distance. Consult about future dangers? Not now; my beach has always been good and it will be in the future.

Of course, never-never land also has other meanings in common usage in the Australian context, and these also have relevance to how communities approach coastal planning issues and conflicts. Historically, new arrivals in a remote, uninviting and confronting place referred to a 'wretched never-never country', where existence had to be wrestled from unforgiving and unfamiliar nature and there were no easy answers. It took quite a while for community identity to become 'we of the never-never'.

And many Australians would be familiar with the concept of buying things 'on the never-never'. On the coast, this translates to enjoy now (e.g. coastal landscapes, easy coastal lifestyles), pay later (leave the tough decisions until later, or assume that things can be managed in instalments going on for ever). Planners who have had to explain long term constraints to land development would be familiar with this attitude. It could be argued that by withdrawing from a state-wide planning benchmark for sea level rise and delegating the parameters for risk assessment to local Councils, the NSW government has encouraged communities to avoid the difficult decisions about management changes, such as access and land use, in beach landscapes. We now have the situation of communities choosing to base risk assessment on politically and socially acceptable coastal 'science' rather than rigorous evidence-based research.

81% of Australia's population lives within 50km of the coast (Hugo 2012). The demography of coastal areas is dynamic, with coastal towns and villages growing rapidly in settlement density and in permanent and visitor population. Regional coastal settlements have a growth rate 60% higher than the national average (National Sea Change Task Force (2005)) and other characteristics of populations in coastal settlements are changing at complex local and regional scales. Examples include age structure, length of residence, experience of extreme coastal events, swimming and surfing skills, landscape preference, frequency of visiting the coast, wealth and employment prospects and dependence on the coastal landscape for economic prosperity. Communities recognise that this demographic and social change is happening and can describe the ways in which the 'sea change' impacts on existing small regional communities.

In contrast, physical change on the coast, such as storm bite erosion and wave overtopping, has previously been seen by coastal communities as short term or cyclic, with beaches bouncing back quickly to a preferred or recognisable condition. But this image of the coast as a relatively unchanging landscape is now challenged in many locations by the spectre of changing rates and severity of coastal erosion, recession and inundation, driven by projected climate change and sea level rise. For some coastal communities, this potential for change to the landscape and the adaptation that may be required to live with it, appear to be more

confronting than the social and demographic changes that are occurring in similar time frames.

2.0 Coastal Zone Management Plans as an introduction to coastal change

The Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) process investigates contemporary issues but also introduces the impacts of projected climate change and sea level rise and the potential for long term and significant change to the physical coastal landscape, in communities in which demographic, socio-economic and cultural change is already occurring. The CZMP is often the first opportunity for structured discussion about coastal hazards and risks and the potential impacts of changing coastal hazards on community use and individual and community values attached to the coastal environment.

Although CZMPs exist as independent entities, with objectives in their own right, they are also part of the broader planning framework and adaptation pathway for coastal communities. First impressions count, so the way in which information is presented and conversations are conducted during CZMP engagement is important to future planning and decision making. The perceptions of coastal processes, values, hazards, change, risks, vulnerability and empowerment that emerge in the CZMP process set the scene for future engagement between planners and communities about change and adaptation.

For an open and constructive discussion about the future of the coast, the three never-never concepts: the coast as a highly valued, unchanging utopia, somehow supported by ecological processes going on in the background; the coast as an unpredictable place where difficult decisions have to be made; and the great Australian tendency to put off to tomorrow whatever is not an emergency today – need to be reconciled. Only then can communities and their local councils properly come to terms with longer term coastal risks and actively plan for the future, rather than be overwhelmed by the challenges of physical coastal change.

Contrary to the overall intent of community and stakeholder engagement during the preparation of CZMPs, the current approach to engagement in the preparation of CZMPs risks reinforcing never-never perspectives, rather than helping communities to reconcile different ways of thinking about coastal change and supporting communities in their preparation for managing climate change driven threats to coastal landscapes, land uses and lifestyles. Current limitations to CZMP engagement mean that it tends not to facilitate the transition to conversations about adaptation which may require policy, behavioural and other changes from communities, decision makers and implementers.

Engagement processes in CZMPs

The NSW Guidelines for Preparing CZMPs (2012) refer to 12 principles. Principle 3 relates to involving the community in decision making and making coastal information publicly available. The minimum requirement in relation to consulting with the local community and other relevant stakeholders is to publicly exhibit the draft plan for not less than 21 days, with notices of the exhibition in local newspapers. Separate consultation is required for land owners potentially affected by an emergency action sub-plan.

CZMPs must also contain information about current uses of the coast, access arrangements, safety and environmental hazards and the cultural and heritage significance of the area. These are all elements of coastal value. CZMPs should provide options to address access management issues (including coastal erosion and recession impacts) and to enhance beach amenity. CZMPs must provide a reasonable balance between any potentially conflicting uses in the coastal zone.

These are not small issues in coastal communities.

Appropriate levels of engagement

Local councils rightly recognise that an exhibition period is not sufficient consultation to inform and engage communities in concepts about coastal processes, coastal change, coastal use conflicts, coastal risks and management priorities for the short and long term, especially where priority setting may require investment in one area above another. The never-never constraints to adaptation require time and strong relationships to acknowledge community concerns and establish constructive dialogue and decision making about the immediate future and longer term.

Briefs for the preparation of CZMPs allude to a more expansive and inclusive engagement program, using a range of communication tools, and commencing with discussion of community perspectives on beach access and use, coastal values, coastal issues, before involving communities in the evaluation of potential management options and adaptive management pathways. Tools and techniques that are relevant to collaborative engagement (as per the IAP2 spectrum) and suitable for high complexity or high outrage issues are suggested. However, the resources available within the CZMP preparation process are more aligned with 'inform' and 'consult' levels of engagement, such as the exhibition of draft Plans that is required by the DECCW Guideline.

CZMP engagement processes are conducted along-side and may be supplemented by a range of other engagement processes offered at the local to regional scale by Council, state agencies and research organisations. Budgets and timeframes available for CZMP engagement mean that sample sizes and methodological rigour can be constrained. This has several implications for the outcomes of the engagement, the quality of the information produced, how well it can be integrated with the results of other processes and the ways in which it prepares the community for further conversations about adaptation.

3.0 Productivity Commission findings on coastal adaptation

In its 2013 analysis, the Productivity Commission identified five groups of constraints to community capacity to make and implement adaptive plans for physical landscape change associated with changing coastal hazard and risk conditions. These are summarised in **Figure 3.1**. Two key aspects constraining adaptation, and strongly linked to engagement processes are psycho social and uncertainty. Further information about components of these constraints is noted in **Table 3.1** and the case study from Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) in **Section 4** elaborates on how engagement practice for the CZMP and other studies has contributed to or ameliorated these challenges.

Figure 3.1 – Constraints to adaptation capacity

(Based on Productivity Commission (2012))



Table 3.1 – Components of psychosocial and uncertainty constraints
(Productivity Commission 2013)

Psycho-social constraints	Uncertainty constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People discount future benefits (e.g. Shafir 2008, in Productivity Commission 2012) ▪ Contestability of climate change/disbelief in climate change ▪ Cultural resistance to change ▪ High risk areas are high value for homes and recreation ▪ Apathy and issue fatigue ▪ Fear of unknown; effects of familiarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of local data – uncertainty and lack of confidence in predictions ▪ Reliance on historical data and experience ▪ Available information not relevant or appropriate to the audiences ▪ Lack of knowledge on effective implementation options

4.0 A case study of coastal values and adaptation perspectives - Eurobodalla coastline

Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) is located on the NSW far south coast, extending about 110km from Durras through to Wallaga. Much of the open coast is within National Park. The Shire has a population of around 36,000 with three main centres and multiple villages and receives about 1 million visitors each year. ESC has a strongly aging population, high unemployment and low socio economic status compared to other areas and an economy that is highly dependent on peak summer season tourism. Some residential areas of the Eurobodalla coast, particularly around Batemans Bay, are within immediate hazard zones or within likely longer term coastal inundation and/or erosion and recession zones.

This case study from ESC illustrates how consultation during CZMP preparation (in this case, in on-line surveys and coastal information days) overlaps with a range of other consultation within Council (such as Council’s Community Survey to support the Community Strategic Plan) and by research organisations (such as NCCARF projects by Norman *et al* (2013) and Barnett and Waters (2013)). The case study reviews what people have said within each of these engagement contexts about the value they place on the coast and what is most important to them.

Because of differences in scale, timing, sampling processes and method, these engagement programs can produce quite different information, so care is needed when interpreting, integrating and applying the findings. The case study highlights a potential disconnect between the CZMP engagement process and other conversations about adaptation. It identifies opportunities to better integrate community involvement in all aspects of planning for and adjusting to coastal change.

Comments about how the limitations of current engagement practice in the early stages of CZMPs (and first impressions count) may be contributing to the range of constraints to adaptation identified by the Productivity Commission and in research projects on the south coast are included in **Table 4.1**.

ESC’s Community Survey (Iris Research 2010) was based on a large, random sample, including phone interviews with resident and non resident ratepayers, focus groups and a one day summit. More than 40% of people said that the beaches, coast and marine environment were the ‘thing’ they valued most in the shire. There was very little change in this value from a previous survey in 2004/5. The natural environment (at 27%) was the second most valued aspect the LGA. The vision that people had for the future was an area with carefully controlled development that would deliver economic prosperity but also protect the natural landscape and lifestyle. These are short term priorities for Council.

Umwelt conducted short on-line surveys as part of the community uses study, one of the key studies for the Batemans Bay and Eurobodalla CZMPs. These surveys were positioned as a way for local residents and non residents to discuss how they use the coast, and their perceptions of coastal processes; and to highlight values and issues of concern, without having to attend a meeting. It is worth noting that attendance at early community engagement sessions for CZMPs is often low, unless there is a particular issue causing outrage in the community. The online survey attracted more responses than a meeting would have done.

Questions asked people about what was important to them about the coast, about their favourite places and what made those places valuable to them. These are useful questions for understanding the current community and for immediate planning of services and facilities, but not so good for long term scenario testing, or evaluating future options.

Responses to the online survey indicated:

- Non retiree age groups identified the coast as their highest value more frequently than did people over 60 years.
- Non residents say they value the coast more highly than residents
- People like the **openness** (outlook or open coastal reserves, reflecting historic clearing of frontal dune systems) and naturalness of the coast
- People like the coast '**just the way it is**'. This could (indirectly) be taken as an indication that certainty and familiarity are important social values.
- Resident respondents were commonly long term (at least 10 years, but often longer than 20 years) who visit the beach at least weekly, and visitor respondents commonly were frequent visitors (more than 10 times), who arrive for a block of time. There was evidence of substantial historical attachment. Few responses were from young people.
- By far the most common uses were walking on the beach and swimming, followed by 'sitting and enjoying the view'. Passive outdoor recreation activities such as bird watching, surfing, kayaking, picnics and beach fishing were also popular.
- Coastal values are very localised, with people, not surprisingly, identifying places that they use every day or every week as the most important to them. Preferred beaches were close to home, safe for swimming (patrolled and unpatrolled) and had good access for all levels of ability.
- When asked about the most important things in which Council should invest to maintain these coastal recreational values, high scores went to:
 - Coastal erosion, recession and inundation (including beach/dune nourishment, protection structures or planning controls)
 - Landcare or Bushcare projects (even though very few people said that this was an important activity for them personally)
 - Walking paths (on the shoreline or in bush the unknown never neverland reserves)
 - Monitoring programs such as water quality
 - General infrastructure (roads, bridges etc)

There are some important limitations to the information obtained from these surveys – with smaller samples than city wide surveys and voluntary participation, results tend to be skewed by the views of those who feel strongly enough to respond. Results could also be affected by timing and by the opinions of influential community leaders. For instance, ESC released a controversial interim sea level rise policy not long before consultation for the CZMPs commenced, focusing community concerns on possible drivers of coastal erosion other than sea level rise. Many survey responses came from people at Long Beach who felt their community was unreasonably affected by the interim policy.

The CZMP for ESC has not yet been exhibited, so direct feedback on policy alternatives for high risk areas is not yet available.

Adaptation constraint studies in Eurobodalla

ESC has also been the focus of several recent climate change adaptation studies, funded by NCCARF; Norman *et al* (2013) and Barnett and Waters (2013) are examples. These studies investigated perceived barriers to adaptation to sea level rise, how to build local government capacity to make adaptive choices, and concepts of future urban planning to accommodate climate change. There are some clear overlaps in the findings of the Productivity Commission (2012) and those reported for the south east coast by Norman *et al.* (2013) and Barnett and Waters (2013). **Table 4.1** lists some important findings about constraints to community adaptation from these research projects in the ESC community, organised to align with the key constraints identified by the Productivity Commission (2012). **Table 4.1** also includes commentary on the extent to which the CZMP consultation process and findings to date are consistent with or could be contributing to the identified constraints.

The research by Norman *et al* (2013) highlights the importance of effective and ongoing community engagement and clear governance arrangements for successful transition to climate change adapted communities over the next two decades. Norman *et al* (2013) suggest that the engagement process should occur in the context of broad access to the best available science (including regular access to leading scientific research organisations) but should also tap into community knowledge and capacity to contribute to observing, monitoring and analysis of change. The study also identified several factors that could detract from the success of engagement (see **Table 4.1**).

Barnett and Waters (2013) conducted detailed structured interviews with residents at Surfside, a low lying beach side suburb of Batemans Bay, as well as semi structured interviews with a sample of residents from the broader Eurobodalla community. Approximately 35% of people thought they would be affected by sea level rise in their lifetime (and they would need to adapt), and a further 42% thought their property would be affected, but not in their lifetime. Community organisation leaders were twice as likely to believe that sea level rise would affect the area in their life-time as were other homeowners.

Community organisation leaders are also more likely than others to be involved in CZMP preparation, either by invitation as Coastal Zone Committee members or as voluntary respondents/attendees. Their views may therefore have a greater influence on the community knowledge and perspective that is incorporated in the CZMP. This is an issue for further analysis in terms of inclusiveness.

Table 4.1 – Coastal community perceptions of coastal hazards and issues - constraints to adaptation

(Key themes from Productivity Commission 2012)

Examples of findings on constraints to successful adaptation in coastal communities <i>(from Norman et al (2013) and Barnett and Waters (2013))</i>	Commentary - CZMP engagement to date in ESC
Governance	
Participants in the research believed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions about adaptive management responses (including land use planning) should be made at the local government scale and implemented by local government and individual property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents in ESC identified managing coastal erosion and inundation and monitoring coastal condition as important activities that Council should be doing, although they also expressed a lack of trust in Council capacity to meet community expectations in relation to these matters. Potential conflicts and outrage arise because of lack of trust of coastal science information delivered by Council.
Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion about what problem policies are addressing, especially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion and concern in relation to ESC's interim sea level rise policy (now in place for four years), and its implications for

<p>when discussion is about risks that are projected to occur in the future, but may not be significant now.</p>	<p>development. This is a similar experience to other councils where interim policies have been introduced before communities are familiar with the issues and have developed a trusting relationship with local decision makers. When does 'now' become the 'future'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In ESC, recent backtracking on sea level rise benchmark values may hinder perceptions that Council has a clear and consistent narrative about climate change and coastal zone management. • Coming to terms with new policy on coastal adaptation can be considered as part of the 'never-never' concept of difficult choices.
<p>Psycho-social</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor connections between a focus on what needs to be done to address issues on the coast now and the issues for two arbitrary future dates – planning horizons of 40 years and 90 years. • Concern about how coastal change will affect the structure, dynamics and interactions of local communities – for instance around land ownership, loss of public land to provide public access to the beach, and the potential for 'polarisation' within small communities in terms of attitudes to the science and management of change. • Concerns about the equity of potential impacts – on private land holders, but also on residents of low lying or vulnerable caravan parks, often on Crown land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are aspects of the 'never never land' mentality, fuelled by lack of clarity of the story about coastal change and confusion about the language of science and risk or lack of trust of the organisation delivering the information. • The existence of multiple choices, with limited access to information about how and why they work (or not) may reduce the likelihood of rational decisions and may lead to long/indefinite delays in decision making. • Perceptions of how others in the community are responding also influence choices made, particularly when there are influential community leaders (e.g. Azjen and Fishburn 2005, in Productivity Commission 2012). • Given the process, resources and timing for CZMP preparation, there is limited control over how messages about coastal change and climate change are positioned in the community, so information that is trusted is more likely to be received from friends, other members of community groups and the local media than directly from Council. • The CZMP feedback at Eurobodalla highlighted the local scale of issues (values, frame of reference, and explanations of change and priorities for action) and also the differing perspectives of people from different age groups, lengths of residence or distinguished by other social/economic factors. This is consistent with studies by the Sea Change Task Force. Residents are keen to see the science presented as a story about their local area – embedded with other stories about change. • Whilst it was clear that some local communities were quite polarised in their views about the reasons for recent shoreline erosion and likely future trends, this was not expressed in terms of concern about vulnerable members of the community. Extended interviews would provide a much more nuanced view of the impacts of coastal change on different groups in communities. • CZMP engagement focuses in the first instance on immediate values and issues (expressed by communities in social terms), and responses to be implemented within 10 years. Future risks are less clearly linked to social or environmental values and more linked to known property/built asset/infrastructure values. So future risks tend not to be expressed in the same terms as current risks. Note the links between perceptions of risk and valuing of the environment in different groups (e.g. people over 60 years attached different importance to the coast than younger age groups). • For CZMPs generally, issues include the representativeness of Coast and Estuary Management Committees and relatively limited (level of engagement and timing) engagement opportunities through electronic and face to face processes. This constrains the development of constructive relationships and fosters questions about hidden agendas, not enough listening, and decisions imposed on communities.

<p>Examples of findings on constraints to successful adaptation in coastal communities<i>(from Norman et al (2013) and Barnett and Waters (2013))</i></p>	<p>Commentary - CZMP engagement to date in ESC</p>
Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution of responsibility for dealing with uncertain change to local government – on issues beyond their expertise or resources. • Information about sea level rise and climate change should come from State and Commonwealth government, because of the scale of the issues; but funding for studies should not detract from the availability of funds for local communities to invest in agreed adaptive responses in a timely manner. • National funding has focused on studies, not on practical advice about implementation of management in local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the standard CZMP process, the science of coastal hazards is presented by Council and consultants (usually not from the local area), rather than the State government. This may dilute the value of the messages. It could help if State and local government were seen to be transparently collaborating with Council on the science. • The CZMP process includes input from technical specialists in the NSW government (supporting Council project management) and in the private sector; readily accessible State and Commonwealth studies do not provide detail on why options work (or not). • Note Principle 5 of the NSW CZMP Guidelines – <i>‘the priority for public expenditure is public benefit; public benefit should cost effectively achieve the best practical long term outcomes.’</i> There are demonstrated significant conflicts when long term (future) hazards affect the interface of public and private property that has been developed for some time. This is the case in ESC.
Uncertainty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need for a ‘clear and consistent narrative’ about the science of coastal change – telling the story in language that is meaningful in communities. • Importance of access to information and to co-sourcing information – from local experience as well as from specialist studies. • People like information at scales relevant to local decision making. People expressed a need for regional scale data to track change and put some ‘touch and feel’ into consideration of local and regional scale scenarios. • Councils, communities and scientists use different language – e.g. ‘risk management’ or ‘adaptation’, creating confusion about issues and processes. • Lack of clarity in advice about constraints to future development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of community knowledge was not specifically expressed in responses to the electronic surveys for the Eurobodalla CZMP, but was a strong view expressed in other conversations. Respondents are clear that community knowledge has value and they use it to ‘reality check’ consultant models, as well as provide feedback on what has been done/has worked before (although process explanations based on community observation can be quite creative). Note also the limitations of community memory. • The most recent CZMP Guidelines (DECCW 2010) are very risk focused, with Management Principles 6 and 7 referring specifically to an ‘(adaptive) risk management approach’. However, ‘risk’ in this context is not a concept mentioned by residents ESC in consultation about coastal values or threats to those values. They are not familiar with the concepts expressed in the Risk Standard ISO 31000.

5.0 Opportunities to improve the process and streamline the transition from CZMP to adaptation engagement

How to better integrate CZMP and adaptation engagement processes? This section elaborates on key themes and considers options to overcome some of the unresolved never-never issues affecting the transition from CZMP to adaptation strategy. Potential strategies to enhance the integration of CZMP and adaptation engagement are noted in boxes below.

Never-never values of the coast – looking back and looking forward

By asking people to talk about their historical and current use of the coast, and how their valuation of the coastal landscape and their coastal lifestyle is shaped by this experience, the

CZMP engagement process risks encouraging idyllic never-never values (the values of a non changing coastline that provides social and cultural continuity), which potentially conflict with the likely reality of the future. The small sample of responses at Batemans Bay and Eurobodalla suggests that these local communities value their coastal environment 'just the way it is'.

The way the coast is valued by the community is largely a social/cultural/economic construct. These social values are also the filter for community preferences about potential management options, contrasting with the language and the rational basis of Council or NRM agency decisions about investment. These are influenced by structured cost-benefit analysis, incorporating scientific biodiversity value and ecosystem services.

The rates of demographic and social change in regional coastal communities mean that a focus on current community use can detract from awareness of the significance of past extreme events (and the possibility of more frequent extreme events in the future). The values expressed by long term residents are not necessarily those that will be relevant to future communities. Engagement in CZMP processes tends to be with those stakeholders who are passionate about an issue in their local area and who have the time and resources to contribute. These people tend to be older citizens and their perspectives are not necessarily representative of other people in the community now or the people who will be that community in the future. In this context, it's worth considering how contemporary and how enduring are the coastal values being identified during CZMP consultation and how relevant they are to future community adaptation.

Options

- Strengthen CZMP engagement on future values, issues and options rather than current community uses, which are often already addressed in other council community planning.
- Use of social media and communication tools that are directed at younger members of the community or which facilitate participation by non resident land holders (who may later become resident landholders) to broaden the relevance of the engagement outcomes for the CZMP and also facilitate the transition into adaptation planning.
- Electronic survey and communication techniques can make engagement activities accessible to a broader range of stakeholders than those who make the time to attend face to face consultation activities. Electronic techniques can also be accommodated in the budget for CZMP preparation rather than can multiple in depth interviews or face to face meetings. However, they are less suitable for delivering a 'win-win' process in conflicted communities.

Access to relevant local scale knowledge – the unknown and uncertain never-never

We have few long term records of changes to beaches and dunes in specific embayments along the NSW coast – the most densely populated part of the Australian coastline and therefore the area with greatest conjecture about change. Detailed reviews of the implementation of technical solutions to coastal hazard issues are only recently emerging. This is important information for communities to become familiar with, so that the heat can be taken out of the debate about superficially appealing but unfeasible options, for now and for adapting to future change.

Options

- Make objective evidence about coastal change at the local scale readily available to communities as early as possible in the CZMP process.
- Make objective assessments of the efficacy of potential management options readily available to communities early in the CZMP process
- Involve communities in structured monitoring of coastal condition and change – physical,

ecological (and make that information readily available). This will facilitate incorporation of community driven local scale information into option evaluation and review of the success of management responses.

Who should do the talking?

The preliminary evidence from ESC suggests that the leadership on the science and partnership for the long haul of evaluating and implementing preferred responses are best delivered by different sources. Coastal hazard studies are currently branded as Council documents and the projects are managed by Council with some technical review by OEH. Would elevating reporting of coastal hazards and risks to a state agency responsibility make a difference to the way in which the information is received? The relationship between council and communities is important for ongoing local ownership of adaptation strategies – which are about communities taking control of difficult choices about their future.

Options

- Where possible, use state agencies and respected and familiar scientific researchers to deliver science, hazard and risk information (including coastal hazard assessments), respecting the scale, complexity and significance of this knowledge.
- Put in the time to build partnerships between Councillors, Council officers and communities for evaluating options and developing ownership of adaptation strategies.
- Consultants can support both parts of the process, but should not be the front for communication, because of the importance of long term relationships for effective management of risk in affected communities.

Relationships, familiarity and trust – overcoming ‘too hard’ never-never challenges

Familiarity can raise the profile of concern about particular issues above the actual risk profile. For instance, there is long experience in documenting the economic value of built assets – private and public – and anyone from Sydney or the NSW coast will know that property-value watching is a pastime embraced with enthusiasm in the community – so property value is familiar and potential impacts on property values are a topic where everyone has an interest and can be an expert. Asset values appear to have driven recent changes to NSW coastal risk policies.

Much less data, and less reliable data, are available on other social and socio-cultural or socio-environmental values of the coast. They attract less community attention in the CZMP process and both communities and managers are less clear and less comfortable with how these values are factored into people’s framing of options and evaluation processes for long term coastal management. Indeed natural areas, managed by NPWS are generally not included in the CZMP at all.

Options

- Introduce a range of engagement actions that help to build familiarity and trust in the people who will be making the decisions about immediate hazards and adaptation options. Where possible, start early, small and easy, to build confidence.
- Introduce early information and activities in local communities to build awareness of less familiar coastal values and risks. Continue to develop methods for quantitative valuation of natural and social assets and make the information readily available to communities.
- Talk to communities about the information that they need and the types of communication that will assist them, without overwhelming them in complex data, ideas and challenges for which they have no time and no appetite.

7.0 References

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