

23 December 2025

The Hon. Janelle Saffin, MP
Minister for Recovery
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
cc. Minister for the Environment

Subject: Coastal Management Program Audit – Request for Collaborative Action

Dear Minister,

Our three organisations, representing 15 Councils in the Sydney region, are actively coordinating multi-council Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) in the Sydney region. CMPs play a vital role in disaster management by identifying coastal hazards, planning mitigation strategies, and enhancing community resilience to events like coastal inundation, coastal erosion and sea level rise.

We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the apparent exclusion of Greater Sydney by the NSW Reconstruction Authority from the development of a Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP). This Plan is a critical alternative funding source for implementing CMP actions, particularly given the growing risk of insufficient funding through the NSW Coastal and Estuaries Grant Program. Hence, the decision by the NSW Reconstruction Authority to exclude Greater Sydney from the DAP process could have dire consequences for Sydney's coastal communities.

Funding Shortfall Threatens Delivery of Certified Sydney CMP Actions

In September 2025, the NSW Audit Office released its [audit report on the NSW Coastal Management Framework](#). The report highlighted systemic issues in the implementation of the *NSW Coastal Management Act 2016* (CM Act) by NSW Government agencies. We strongly support the Audit Office's recommendations, particularly those aimed at improving oversight, clarifying agency roles, reviewing the Coastal and Estuaries Grants Program, and strengthening strategic planning.

However, one of the most concerning findings was the potential shortfall in funding available through the NSW Government's Coastal and Estuary (C&E) Grants Program to deliver CMP actions. It was identified that DCCEEW estimated that the total cost of all actions in the 17 certified CMPs is greater than the amount currently available in the grants program.

This issue is compounded by the fact that 43 additional CMPs are in development, including 11 in the Sydney region. Most of the Sydney CMPs are at least two years away from certification, placing them at greatest risk of non-delivery due to delayed access to funding.

DAPs are an important alternative funding source for coastal disaster mitigation

The NSW Reconstruction Authority's correspondence to the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (Ref: D25/9539) noted that undelivered CMP actions will be carried forward into the DAP process. This makes the Greater Sydney DAP an essential mechanism for securing alternative funding. However, the correspondence also stated that a Greater Sydney DAP is not currently a priority and will only be considered when further resourcing becomes available.

We urgently seek the NSW Reconstruction Authority to reconsider this position. Without a clear commitment and secured NSW Government funding, CMP actions designed to mitigate and plan for disasters in Sydney's coastal zone are unlikely to be realised, and the consequences of this will be borne by densely populated areas affected.

The vulnerability of Sydney's coastal communities demands a fair and equitable approach to funding support

Sydney's coastal councils are among the most vulnerable in NSW and deserve equitable access to disaster adaptation funding. This is supported by multiple government reports:

- The [2024 State Disaster Mitigation Plan](#) identified Northern Beaches Council as one of the most exposed councils in NSW
- The [2018 NSW Estuary Tidal Inundation Exposure Assessment](#) identified metro Sydney as the region with the 2nd highest level of exposure to coastal inundation with sea level rise
- The [2025 National Climate Risk Assessment](#) identifies six suburbs in Sydney as primary hotspots for risks from sea level rise in Australia.

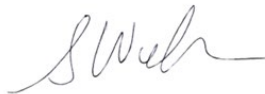
Despite the documented vulnerability of Sydney's coastal areas, Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs) are being developed in other regions across NSW, while Sydney remains excluded. We understand that these DAPs are being progressed by Joint Organisations of Councils (JOs), supported by Commonwealth Disaster Ready funding. Unfortunately, the Sydney region lacks any formalised JO governance structure - a potentially significant oversight of the NSW Government that is hindering our ability to access equitable funding and constraining our ability to plan for and coordinate region-wide disaster adaptation efforts.

With 63% of NSW's population residing in Sydney, it is imperative that the NSW Government ensures equitable access to funding and strategic planning support for Sydney councils, rather than limiting these opportunities to regions outside Sydney. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and explore ways to support the development of a Greater Sydney DAP in partnership with the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Yours sincerely,

All three Catchment Groups

Cr Shannon Welch
Chair Sydney Coastal Councils Group



Cr Clare Rafan
Chair Cooks River Alliance



Cr David Walsh
Chair Georges Riverkeeper

