

# NSW Coastal Dredging Strategy

## Healthy and accessible waterways

The NSW Government is committed to taking a strategic and proactive approach to dredging that delivers recreational boating benefits for local waterways in regional NSW. The NSW Coastal Dredging Strategy identifies the funding arrangements to support delivery of navigational dredging projects to improve the accessibility and safety of our coastal waterways in regional NSW.

The state's maritime asset portfolio includes 25 coastal harbours, 21 'trained' river entrances and 38 estuary training walls worth a total of \$1.5 billion. A large proportion of these assets are central to regional economic growth although they don't include Newcastle, Port Kembla and Sydney, which are managed by Port Corporations.

Locations where dredging to maintain navigational access to the state-owned maritime infrastructure are considered under the Coastal Dredging Strategy as 'priority regional locations' and dredging at these locations will be fully funded by the NSW Government under its Coastal Infrastructure Program.

Other locations in regional coastal NSW where dredging is required to meet community needs and that deliver navigational benefits in local waterways will be delivered in partnership between state and local government under the Rescuing Our Waterways Program.

The NSW Government is delivering through Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and Boating Now \$70 million towards new and improved boat ramps, pontoons, wharves and boat storage, which is the boating licence and registration fee at work. It is important that boating accessibility to these facilities is maintained.

The Coastal Dredging Strategy is expected to be delivered in three stages over the next ten years. This will provide certainty to councils on the availability of state funding and assist in the planning for dredging in local waterways through the development of local dredging strategies and the necessary investigations and studies that lead to on-ground dredging works. It also assists councils to plan for dredging to maximise benefits for using dredged sand for local coastal erosion and beach recession.

As dredging is not a legislative responsibility, the Coastal Dredging Strategy has been developed and is coordinated by the Department of Industry (DoI)—Lands being the responsible agency for the state-owned maritime assets (i.e. 'priority regional locations') and for Crown land in NSW which includes the bed of the sea, estuaries, river entrances, coastal lakes and lagoons and some coastal wetlands.

The strategy aligns with the government's vision of a strong and diverse NSW economy and contributes to increasing the capacity of primary industries and communities to drive economic growth in particular across regional NSW.

## Benefits of dredging

Healthy waterways are the lifeblood of many regional communities and are the basis for recreation, tourism, boating and primary production such as oyster farming.

Dredging is a discretionary activity so it's important for state and local government to work with local communities to design projects that meet their needs.

Some of the benefits include:

- safer navigation
- accessibility to local waterways and boating infrastructure and facilities
- improved waterway conditions

- improved water flows for healthy estuaries
- use of dredged sand for beach nourishment especially at locations susceptible to coastal erosion
- flow-on benefits for local economies by increasing coastal tourism opportunities through activities such as fishing and boating.

## NSW coastal economies

Boating access to NSW waterways contributes significantly to regional economies. It helps drive direct and indirect employment, investment and business growth and boosts productivity.

The inaugural NSW Boating Statement 2014 (TfNSW) captures information from over 190 projects across 11 Regional Boating Plans across the state and shows that state-wide funding to the boating industry has almost tripled.

Regional Boating Plans have been developed in consultation with communities and will deliver \$70 million worth of new and improved boating infrastructure across the state.

Across NSW there are almost 500,000 licensed boat operators with boat registrations increasing around 2.8 percent per annum over the last ten years.

Economically the boating industry:

- employs approximately 8,000 people
- reportedly supports an additional 5,000 jobs
- provides direct revenue of \$2 billion
- provides a further \$1.38 billion per annum through recreational boating-related visitations
- contributes 4.3% of the NSW 'day trip' market and 9.7% of over-night stays.

Northern NSW could be considered to be ideally located to build on opportunities as a recreational boating destination as the Queensland Gold Coast has a saturated market.

In addition to boating, commercial fishing is valued in excess of \$100 million per year.

The industry underpins the economy of many coastal towns providing wealth and employment in places, and at times of the year, where there is little other economic activity.

The NSW oyster aquaculture industry alone is worth around \$33 million per annum.

Tourism is currently a \$7.8 billion industry for coastal regions, where waterways feature highly in the tourism experience.

## Prioritisation of dredging investment

The NSW Government is committed to taking a strategic and proactive approach to delivering dredging for coastal communities in regional NSW.

The Coastal Dredging Strategy is expected to be implemented in three stages to maintain accessibility to waterways and improve environmental health.

## Implementation

<b>Stage One—2017 to 2020</b>	\$14 million in total over 4 years
<b>Stage Two—2021 to 2024</b>	To be reviewed following implementation of Stage One
<b>Stage Three—2025 to 2026</b>	To be reviewed following implementation of Stage Two

**Table 1. Implementation of the NSW Coastal Dredging Strategy**

### Stage One – 2017 to 2020

The Stage One priorities include:

- supporting local government and building their capacity to undertake dredging operations in local waterways.
- assisting councils to prioritise and establish long-term dredging delivery plans to maximise funding opportunities under Rescuing Our Waterways Program
- assisting councils to identify linkages with dredging works and coastal hazard mitigation and beach amenity improvements and to identify co-funding opportunities under the Coastal Management Program (administered by the Office of Environment & Heritage).
- continued implementation of dredging program for Priority Regional Locations and Dredging of Priority Waterways on the North Coast\*
- continued monitoring program for Priority Regional Waterways that updates waterway bed levels with results made available to the community
- establishing optimum channel design (width/depth) for all Priority Regional Waterways in consultation with stakeholders to guide future maintenance dredging.

Priority Regional Locations will receive \$2 million over four years and local waterways will receive over \$6 million over four years through the Rescuing Our Waterways Program.

The priority locations are shown in Figure 1.

\*Dredging of Priority Waterways on the North Coast was announced in the 2014–15 NSW Budget with delivery of \$10 million worth of dredging on the north coast over four years. Projects completed and/or underway include Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond, Evans and Clarence Rivers with planning commenced for dredging of the Richmond, Clarence and Macleay river entrances.

# Delivery of funding under Rescuing our Waterways Program

## Total \$6 million over 4 years

- annual call for eligible dredging projects with up to \$1.5 million available per annum
- includes an allocation to assist local government to develop dredging strategies and/or associated studies.

To ensure the best investment outcome, eligible projects will be assessed and prioritised against a set of criteria including:

- access to existing and/or proposed maritime infrastructure
- contribution of boating to regional economy
- severity of shoaling and longevity and practicality of dredging
- environmental benefits and sensitivity
- compatibility with coastal zone management planning and NSW Boating Now
- in principle agreement from DoI—Lands and other key government agencies
- demonstrated support from local community.

## More information

[www.industry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au)

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