

Rescuing our Waterways funding assistance program

Overview

The NSW Government is committed to the delivery of a Coastal Dredging Strategy to improve the accessibility and environmental health of the state's waterways. The benefits that can be achieved by dredging our waterways include:

- enhanced access for recreational and commercial waterway users and safer boating;
- resource recovery (that is, beneficial use of dredge material for beach nourishment); and
- flow-on benefits for tourism and local economies.

The Coastal Dredging Strategy includes the *Rescuing our Waterways* Program which is currently in its fifth phase. The first four phases, which commenced in 2011, delivered funding to dredging projects in a number of local government areas including Eurobodalla, Shoalhaven, Georges River, Hornsby, Central Coast, Mid Coast, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Nambucca and Ballina.

The extended *Rescuing our Waterways* Program will run over four years (2017/18 – 2020/21) with up to \$6 million available.

Funding of up to \$1.5 million is expected to be available in 2019/20 under the sixth phase of the *Rescuing our Waterways* Program.

The *Rescuing our Waterways* program is administered by NSW Department of Industry-Lands & Water

It is expected that the demand for dredging will exceed the level of funding that is available, hence priority will be given to those applications which best address the prescribed assessment criteria.

The application, assessment and project implementation processes are described in detail below.

Who can apply?

Coastal Councils can apply and will be required to make a financial contribution of at least 50% of project costs and be responsible for developing and managing their projects.

What will be funded?

Eligible projects are expected to enable navigational benefits and promote economic growth and productivity. Dredging projects that may be subsidised under this program include:

- navigation for a range of vessels (recreational, tourism and commercial);
- access to public waterway infrastructure such as boat ramps and wharves;
- dredging strategies and/or their supporting studies (e.g. sediment hydrodynamics); and
- pre-dredge activities for projects which are eligible and likely to proceed to dredging for vessel navigation.

The application process

To apply for funding from *Rescuing our Waterways* interested applicants must complete and submit an application form to the Department of Industry – Lands & Water.

Applicants should ensure they:

- provide comprehensive and accurate information in the application form
- adequately address each of the assessment criteria (refer below)
- adequately address any regulatory requirements associated with their proposed activity (e.g. planning approval)
- attach all relevant documentation.

The assessment process

Key steps in the process

Each application received before the expiry of the closing date will be assessed in accordance with the following steps:

1. All applications will be reviewed to ensure they are complete and eligible for consideration (refer to Assessment Criteria below).
2. The Department of Industry (DoI) Lands & Water will liaise with relevant public authorities as part of an initial assessment of the applications.
3. Applications will then be reviewed and ranked by the Rescuing our Waterways Assessment Committee (consisting of senior representatives from Roads & Maritime Services and Department of Industry – Lands and Water).
4. The recommendations of the Committee will be considered by the Minister for Lands and Forestry.

Assessment methodology

A set of assessment criteria (refer below) will be used throughout the assessment process to assist in determining:

- Whether the application is eligible for consideration in the process.
- The merits of the proposed activity e.g. the nature of the problems it will address and/or the benefits to the community it will deliver.
- The relative priority (ranking) of those applications deemed to have sufficient merit.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria will be used to determine the eligibility, merits and final ranking of each application, based on specific information requested in the official form.

Eligibility criteria will be evaluated on a 'yes/no' basis, where an answer of 'no' to any of these will mean that the application is ineligible for funding consideration. Assessable criteria will be evaluated on a comparative, weighted basis.

Applicant criteria

The eligibility criteria are:

- The application is supported by the authorised senior officer of the organisation.
- The organisation has the capability and capacity to ensure the activity is effectively, efficiently and safely completed.
- The organisation agrees to enter into, and be bound by, the conditions in the funding agreement;
- The assessable criteria are:
 - Demonstrated performance in relation to the delivery of government supported projects.
 - Demonstrated capacity to work in partnership (if relevant) with stakeholders in relation to the delivery of projects.
 - Demonstrated performance in meeting governance obligations e.g. post-activity project and expenditure reporting.

Activity criteria

The eligibility criterion is:

- The activity is consistent with the NSW Government's Coastal Dredging Strategy (see further information below).
- The assessable criteria includes:
 - The activity is supported by user groups, the local community, and other relevant government authorities.
 - The activity will deliver broad public benefits.
 - The activity is technically feasible, represents value for money and has long term benefits;
 - The activity has minimal risks.
 - Commitment to at least 50% funding contribution and project delivery.

Funding priorities

The activity will also be assessed based on the following priorities, with the highest priority given to applications involving:

1. Preparation of dredging strategies.
2. Demonstrated navigation improvements in waterways for a range of boating enthusiasts and for the continued viability of commercial boating operations and tourism where compatible with the estuary management planning process.
3. Reinstates waterway access to public aquatic infrastructure such as boat ramps and wharves.
4. Pre-dredge activities for projects which would be eligible for funding and are likely to proceed to dredging including investigations (such as sediment analysis, sediment hydrodynamics, aquatic flora and fauna surveys) and environmental impact assessments.

Note: 1 is the highest while 4 is the lowest priority.

An application's final ranking will determine whether or not it can be supported from the available funds.

Coastal Dredging Strategy

Coastal waterways are dynamic sedimentary systems. Periodic maintenance dredging is often required to help achieve the NSW Government's objectives of providing improved access and safety in our waterways and river entrances.

The focus of the Coastal Dredging Strategy is the delivery of navigation dredging projects. The Coastal Dredging Strategy can be viewed at: <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/major-projects/infrastructure>

Stage One priorities of the Coastal Dredging Strategy Include:

- Supporting local government and build 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).

The payments and reporting process

Overview

The following will occur subsequent to the Minister's approval of the recommendations of the *Rescuing our Waterways* Assessment Committee:

The Minister will write to the successful applicants offering them a funding grant.

- Department of Industry – Lands & Water will write to unsuccessful applicants.
- Successful applicants will have two months to accept the offer and the associated terms (see below), otherwise the offer will lapse.
- The successful applicant will submit a Work Plan (in the prescribed format) which details the Project's planned activities, budget, timeline, output/outcomes and milestones.
- The successful applicant will complete the activity within 12 months of accepting the grant (unless otherwise agreed and specified in the letter of offer).
- The successful applicant will submit milestone and post activity reports.
- The successful applicant will submit a tax invoice and expenditure claim based on actual expenditure and milestone post activity reports.

Standard terms of funding grants

Successful applicants will be required to comply with a number of specified terms. These terms are typically covered in the document "Funding Agreement for Financial Assistance".

More information

For further information please contact:

Department of Industry-Lands & Water

Phone: 1300 886 235

Email: cl.enquiries@crowland.nsw.gov.au

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