



Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas

Inquiry Overview

There has been a significant growth of population in the coastal areas of NSW over the past decade. Over 85% of the NSW population resides within 50 km of the coast (ABS June 2001). Between 1996 and 2001 one quarter of Australia's total increase in population was concentrated within 3 km of the coast in the 'sun belt' regions of NSW and Queensland.

The population growth in coastal areas is caused by a number of factors, including the boom in property prices and the shift of people from major metropolitan areas in search of a better lifestyle and more affordable residential housing. This growth is expected to increase with an ongoing trend of aging populations retiring in quiet coastal communities and increased numbers of young families searching for a lifestyle that is both relaxed and affordable. In addition, coastal communities experience seasonal population growth with the arrival of tourists during the holiday periods.

The coastal population growth and the increased residential and commercial development along the coast have placed significant demands on coastal communities. These include:

- Basic infrastructure: roads, power, water and waste infrastructure;
- Social/community services: aged care, education facilities, health, social and policing services;
- Economic: creation of local jobs through increased economic planning and development;
- Environmental: prevention of coastal erosion and pollution and creation of sustainable communities that would protect the fragile coastal environment.

Governments are faced with addressing these challenges through planning and development on two fronts:

- Responding to the needs of growing communities in coastal areas;
- Directing and guiding growth into specific areas to ensure more sustainable coastal growth for the future.

When addressing the challenges of coastal development, there is a need for coordination of policies and planning strategies between local, state and Commonwealth governments. Flexibility in planning and management should also be adopted to ensure that the life cycle needs of growing communities are addressed.

The Committee is seeking comments about these issues as reflected in the inquiry terms of reference.