



Good morning, and thank you Mayor Ian Tiley for your introduction and invitation to speak at the Coastal Conference here in Yamba. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and their tenure and nurture of the land.

We value our coasts very highly, for a number of reasons. They provide us with benefits, from amenity and recreation to industry and employment – and of course they also have environmental values in themselves.

What I would like to speak about today is how we can support these values - environmental, economic and socio-cultural - and fulfil a vision of healthy functional coastal landscapes.

We can't take that vision for granted, because the pressures, from climate change and population growth, are far from trivial.

But we do have a set of realistic targets and a system in NSW to achieve them.

First, let me outline the pressures.



This slide is a graphic reminder of the tornado we saw recently in Lismore – how many times can we say we have had tornadoes in Lismore in the past?

It underwrites a key message: that climate change will have real impacts on our coastal communities and natural resources.

CSIRO said (in the Northern Rivers Climate Change report, 2007) that:

- a warming of 1.0 degree Celsius and no change in rainfall - which is a moderate scenario for 2030 - would make the climate of Coffs Harbour similar to the current climate of Lismore.
- Yamba will have up to 7 days per year above 35 degrees, up from the current 1, by the year 2070.

We know that climate change will mean flooding and sea level rise, with impacts on floodplains, estuaries, shore lines and saltmarshes where we live.



These pictures, from the Sydney Morning Herald, are an example of the developments that we are allowing on the coast. They highlight the pressure of population growth on the natural resources of the coast.

The coastal growth rate is 2%, as compared with the national average of only 1.2% (Alan Stokes, National Sea Change Taskforce, and ABS).

Planning decisions do have an enormous cumulative impact on the natural resources of the coast. We need to ensure that individual developments do not add up to an overall loss of functionality in our landscapes – death by a thousand cuts.

When we consider individual planning decisions, we need to focus on what we want our future to look like: what our long term vision for the coast is.

Let me now try to outline what our long term vision is.



Our vision is reflected in a set of targets to improve or maintain the condition and extent of our natural resources: biodiversity, water, land and community.

These targets are enshrined in the NSW State Plan and they are required to be followed by the whole of government – the state government, CMAs, and local government. They are useful also for community NRM groups.

It is the first time that natural resources goals and priorities have been given this profile.

While the targets do not explicitly include a beach target, they do apply to the coast. For example:


- The target for native vegetation includes dune vegetation
- The target for water include wetlands, estuaries and coastal lake ecosystems
- The marine target covers rocky reefs and the open water environment
- The invasive species target covers weeds such as Bitou Bush

If we deliver on the targets, we will be able to manage the coast.

natural
resources
commission

CMA and their CAPs

- Ten-year strategic plans
- Regional – state – national priorities
- Prospectus for government and private investment
- Guide best actions to deliver integrated NRM outcomes



To deliver the state targets, we need to understand how they apply regionally.

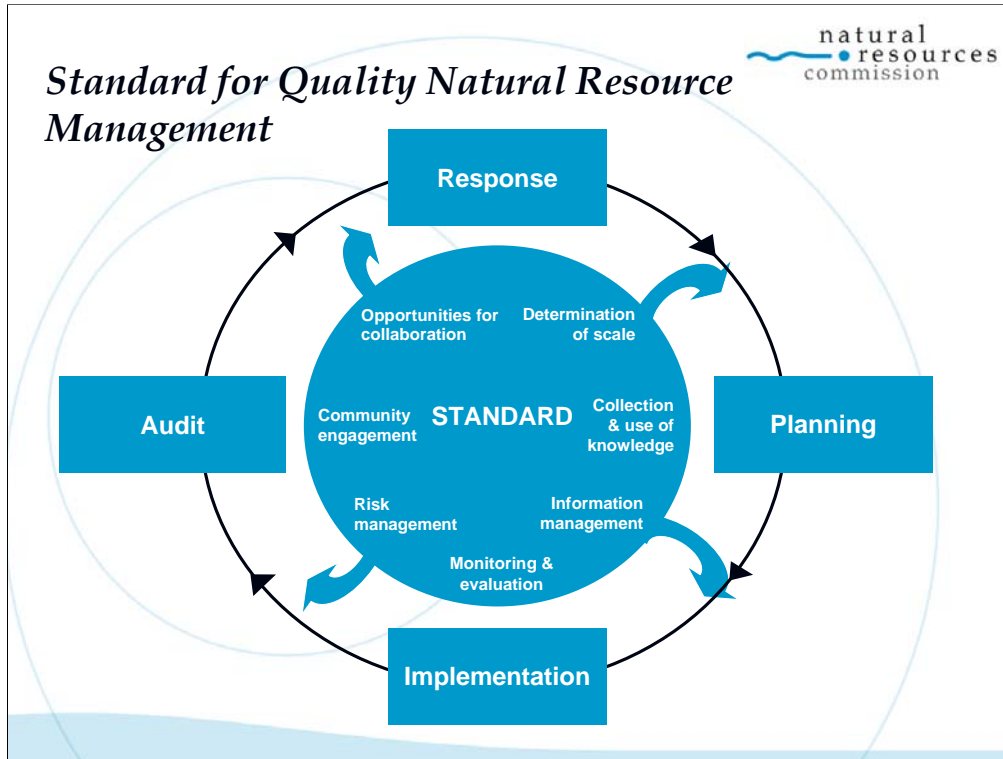
This is done via the catchment action plan (CAP), which is a prospectus for investment in managing coastal resources at the regional level.

The CAPs need to address the pressures of climate change and population pressure.

CAPs are developed by the CMAs and it is vital that all of government and the community embrace them. As Judy Henderson (Chair, Northern Rivers CMA) says, the CAP needs to be for everyone in the region - if it isn't then we need to change it.

CAPs are living documents that need ongoing improvement and should evolve and adapt to changing information and conditions.

In other words, they need to adaptively manage.



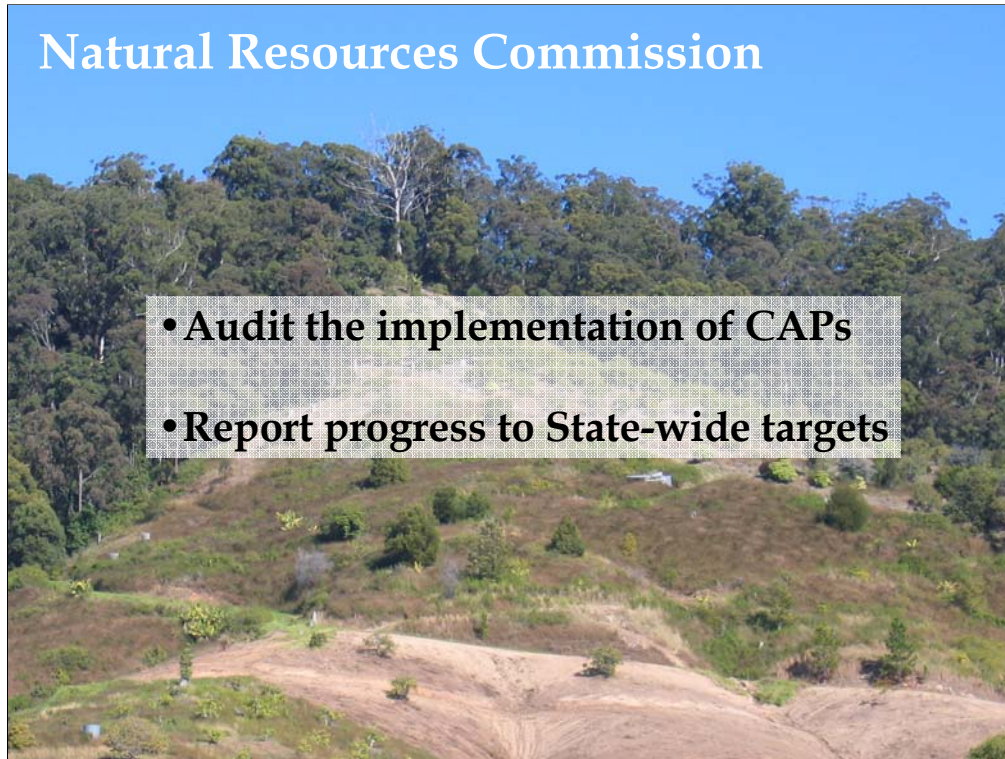
This slide shows the adaptive management cycle: plan – implement – audit – respond.

The cycle should be performed in accordance with a standard – just as a building is designed to a standard to ensure that it doesn’t fall down.

Our standard is called the standard for quality NRM and is a benchmark for how we should do business to give us the greatest chance of achieving our natural resource targets.

CAPs can improve over time using the standard, for example by collecting the best information, monitoring and evaluating progress, managing risk, and engaging with the community.

The standard can also be used by local govt and other NRM bodies.



There are two more important roles to help achieve our vision for the coast.

One: a strong and independent audit role. The Natural Resources Commission will carry out this role, and audit the implementation of the CAPs. The audits will identify the good and the bad outcomes on the ground. This will help to promote improvement by the CMAs.

Two: a strong reporting role. The State Plan requires regular reporting to the Premier, including the NRC reporting on progress toward the targets. Our reports will be made publicly available.

This, in summary, is the model for managing our natural resources in NSW.

I think it is a robust one, and we should give it time to work.

But there are a couple of critical areas which we need to keep a close eye on.

Critical issue: Better information for decisions



The first critical issue is that we need to have good information.

This is important so we can track progress toward the targets. It is also important for good decision-making, because it is difficult to manage what we cannot measure.

We need information and data at the right scales, from site and local to regional and state-wide scales.

That's why it is crucial for agencies and CMAs to work together to implement the Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Strategy.

Again, this information should be publicly accessible.

Critical issue: Integrated catchment, regional and local planning



I mentioned at the start that our coasts have multiple values. We forget at our peril that the environmental values drive the other values, of industry and employment.

Planners and developers need to know where the “no-go” areas are. We cannot afford to put them at risk.

So this is the second critical issue: our natural resources management should be intimately integrated with our land-use planning system.

The CAP targets should be made spatially explicit in the Local Environment Plans.

A good opportunity for this is the current round of revisions of the LEPs.



If we work together to address these critical issues, I'm optimistic that the model we have in NSW can meet the challenges facing the coast.

We have the targets and the standard for quality natural resource management, and a strong audit and reporting role.

We should ensure that we have good information, and that we integrate natural resources management with the planning system.

If we take this seriously, I believe we can look forward to coastal communities and landscapes that are rich in natural heritage, rich in economic capital, and rich in human well-being.

Thank you.