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MEETING THE SEA CHANGE CHALLENGE:

Sea Change Communities in Coastal Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REPORT FOR THE NATIONAL SEA CHANGE TASKFORCE

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Executive Summary

Coastal communities around Australia and around the world are struggling to plan for rapid population growth driven by internal migration from metropolitan cities and inland areas. Described as the “sea change” phenomenon by demographers Ian Burnley and Peter Murphy (2004), the implications of this movement are significant for the communities and the nation. Development pressures associated with rapid population growth offer opportunities for new in-migrants in the form of high quality open space but at the same time these opportunities pose threats to sensitive coastal processes and environments, including coastal waters, dunes, wetlands, and distinctive landscapes. Many coastal communities are surrounded by environments of national and international heritage importance, such as national parks, world heritage areas, and, increasingly, marine protected areas. These places are particularly vulnerable to inappropriate development which threatens biodiversity, cultural heritage sites, recreational and tourism values. The social implications of sea change migration are also profound. In spite of new population growth, many non metropolitan coastal communities are characterised by high levels of unemployment, lower than average household incomes, and greater levels of socio-economic disadvantage along with higher numbers of seniors than other parts of Australia. Increasing population growth and development activity in these areas is not translating to long term economic gains usually associated with population expansion. Social cleavages are occurring between existing residents and newcomers and between wealthier, usually retiree, sea changers and those lower income groups who have been pushed out of expensive metropolitan areas.

This report highlights these issues and examines how existing coastal policy and planning frameworks in Australia are responding to them. The report has been prepared for the National Sea Change Taskforce, which includes over 50 local government areas in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. The research aimed to identify the key social, economic, and environmental planning issues facing coastal sea change communities in Australia, and review current responses to these issues. It has been prepared to establish a baseline for future research. The specific research objectives were to:

- Define the sea change phenomenon and document the manifestation of sea change in peri and non metropolitan coastal communities;
- Develop a profile of the various types of sea change communities in Australia, drawing on key social, economic, and environmental indicators;
- Review policy and planning responses to sea change in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia; and,
- Identify priorities for policy intervention and further research.

The research included three main steps: (1) a review of existing research and data on coastal migration and urbanisation in Australia; (2) development of a typology of coastal communities affected by the sea change process and the major planning issues they face, using a sample of 55 local government areas involved in the interim National Sea Change Taskforce in 2004; and, (3) analysis of coastal policy and planning frameworks (including regional and local plans) in each State, to evaluate current responses to the sea change phenomenon.



The Sea Change Phenomenon in Australia

Section 2 of the report summarises existing research and data on migration and urbanisation in coastal Australia.

Migration to Non Metropolitan Coastal Areas

The movement of significant numbers of people from metropolitan areas and regional cities to non metropolitan and especially coastal areas is long term, with its origins in the late 1960s and early 1970s as retirees sought ideal seaside environments. Even earlier, there was some movement of retirees from metropolitan areas and from inland farming communities to regional coastal settlements in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria (Burnley and Murphy 2004).

Since the 1970s there have been cyclical increases and decreases in migration flows to coastal areas. Growth intensified in many coastal areas in the early 1980s, before moderating in the 1990s. Although demographers have observed an overall slowing in the rate of migration to the coast, population growth in coastal areas remains high in proportional and numerical terms (Burnley and Murphy 2004). The rate of growth in many coastal local government areas is equivalent to or higher than that of metropolitan areas (ABS 2004a).

There are strong regional and State variations in this growth. Time series data shows that non metropolitan coastal areas of New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia had particularly rapid population growth between 1991 and 1996, while local governments in South Australia and Victoria largely experienced an acceleration of growth in the later census period (1996-2001) (Figure A4.1).

Sea Changers

- Retirees contribute to the sea change phenomenon, but are no longer the major drivers of coastal population growth (ABS 2004a).
- New residents of high growth coastal regions are actually of a younger age profile than Australia as a whole and significantly younger than the existing profile of communities affected by sea change: 79% of new residents in coastal areas are younger than 50, compared with 71% of Australia overall (ABS 2004a). However, the younger age of sea changers is not likely to affect the high median age of sea change areas in the immediate future because the newcomers represent only a small proportion of the total population.
- As the baby-boomer generation is expected to start retiring later this decade, the number of retirees moving to the coast (and some inland areas offering high amenity and access to major population centres) is likely to rise again, contributing to an overall increase in the rate of population growth in these places.

Motivations of Sea Changers

- People moving to sea change localities are motivated by a range of “push” and “pull” factors, particularly housing costs, the amenity of coastal areas and employment circumstances (ABS 2004a). Additionally, a combination of personal circumstances (particularly social networks) and cultural factors (perceptions about a particular place and sense of connection to “reference groups” within it) influence decisions to migrate (Stimson and Minnerly 1998).
- The high cost of housing in metropolitan centres contributes to the sea change phenomenon. More affluent sea changers realise high capital gains from city housing and “down size” in lifestyle destinations. Traditionally, some of these people have been motivated by the ideal of an alternative lifestyle in rural areas, particularly in the coastal hinterlands of northern New South Wales (Burnley and Murphy 2004). Other sea changers seek more affordable housing in peri metropolitan areas (frequently along the coast) and further afield.



- Housing affordability is the main factor affecting the decisions of lower income and income support recipients (the unemployed, single parent households, disabled and aged pensioners) to move to non metropolitan areas (Marshall et al. 2003). However, lifestyle factors such as better access to beaches and natural habitat and a more close knit community are also an important consideration and most low income movers rate their new homes as better places to live, despite poorer transportation, shopping and other services (Marshall et al. 2003).
- Improvements in transport and communication technology mean that an increasing number of workers can use the internet as well as contract outsource their services so they do not need to be permanently based in the city, although easy access for partial commuting is important (Marshall et al. 2003).

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Non Metropolitan Communities in Coastal Australia

- Residential and tourism development associated with the sea change phenomenon does not necessarily lead to sustainable economic growth or improved socio-economic outcomes for local populations. This is because growth in sea change areas is associated with new jobs in lower paid occupational sectors such as retail, restaurants, tourism, and caregiving. Moreover these jobs are frequently part time and subject to seasonal fluctuations (O'Connor 2004, Stimson et al. 2003).
- Coastal communities in non metropolitan Australia have the highest proportion of low-income households (17.3% compared to 13.9% in Australia overall) (Hugo 2004). Coastal areas also have the highest proportion of families receiving income support benefits. Eight per cent are receiving labour market benefits compared to 5.9% in Australia overall (Hugo 2004).
- Coastal regions have the highest median age (38 years compared to 35 for Australia overall), have experienced the largest increase in median age over the past census period, and have the highest "elderly dependency ratio"¹ of Australia (24.1 in the populated coastal region of non metropolitan Australia compared to 19 for Australia overall) (ABS 2004a, Hugo 2004).

Profile of Sea Change Communities

Section 3 of the report draws on population data and socio-economic indicators collected for a sample of 55 councils participating in the activities of the National Sea Change Taskforce in 2004 to develop a typology of communities affected by sea change. We identify five broad "ideal types":

- Coastal Commuters - suburbanised satellite communities in peri metropolitan locations
- Coastal Getaways - small to medium coastal towns within 3 hours drive of a capital city
- Coastal Cities - substantial urban conurbations beyond the State capitals
- Coastal Lifestyle Destinations - predominantly tourism and leisure communities
- Coastal Hamlets - small, remote coastal communities often surrounded by protected natural areas.

Coastal Commuters

- Coastal Commuters are situated at the edge of the capital cities and include Gosford and Wyong in New South Wales, Pine Rivers and Caboolture in Queensland, Onkaparinga in South Australia, Casey in Victoria and Wanneroo, Mandurah and Rockingham in Western Australia. Most of these areas experienced more than double the national rate of growth between 1996 and 2001.

¹ The elderly dependency ratio is the ratio of the elderly population to the working age population (ABS 2004a).



- Growth in these areas is closely associated with urban pressures – a “spillover effect” from increasingly unaffordable metropolitan areas to designated growth localities on the urban fringe. However, lifestyle factors – the attraction of being near the coast but still within “commuting” distance to the city for work or family – also contribute to the growth of these areas. Therefore they are partially affected by the “sea change” phenomenon as well as being within the commute shed of major job areas.
- Coastal Commuters tend to have a lower median age than Australia overall, and much lower than that of other sea change community types. For example, Casey in Victoria and Wanneroo in Western Australia had a median age of 31 in 2001, and Pine Rivers in Queensland had a median age of 32, compared to the national median of 35. Gosford and Wyong in New South Wales, with a median age of 38 and 37 respectively, are exceptions to this trend, reflecting a long term tradition of retirement to these areas.
- Unemployment in most of the Coastal Commuter communities in our sample of 55 councils was under 10% in 2001, however in most cases unemployment remained above State levels. Exceptions are Pine Rivers in Queensland (with an unemployment rate of 5.8% in 2001), Casey in Victoria (6.1%) and Kingborough in Tasmania (7.0%).
- Coastal Commuters have the highest levels of employment in manufacturing industries (the highest in the sample of Coastal Commuters being Casey (23.4%), Onkaparinga (19.3%). Employment in manufacturing declined between 1996 and 2001 in each of these communities (and the nation), while the construction, retail, accommodation and restaurant sectors grew in all communities.
- Most Coastal Commuters in the sample have a lower score on the ABS socio-economic “Index of Relative Advantage/Disadvantage”² than Australia overall, although their scores tend to be higher than that of other community types affected by the sea change phenomenon. Coastal Commuters with lower scores include Caboolture (925.1) and Wyong (937.4) compared to Australia (994), regional cities (985) and populated coastal areas (969). Higher scores were recorded in Pine Rivers (1025.5), Kingborough (1035.1) and Gosford (1008.8) (ABS 2004d; Haberkorn et al 2004).

Coastal Getaways

- Coastal Getaways are local government areas comprising of small to medium towns within approximately three hours drive of a capital city. This proximity means they are attractive locations for domestic tourism, including day trips and weekend “escapes”. Historically, many of these communities were once low-key family holiday destinations or small fishing villages.
- Examples of Coastal Getaways include Bunbury and Busselton in Western Australia, towns on the Bass and Surf Coast in Victoria, and Victor Harbor in South Australia. Rates of growth in these destinations have been significantly higher than national and State averages in recent years. For instance, Victor Harbor had an annual rate of growth of 3% between 2002 and 2003 compared with 0.6% for South Australia overall. The Bass and Surf Coasts in Victoria grew at more than double the State rate between 1996 and 2001 and during 2002 and 2003.
- Getaways attract the growing number of “telecommuters” and people whose work does not require them to be permanently based in the city. The accessibility of these communities also allows retirees to retain links to family remaining in the city. A high proportion of property owners in these locations are absentee landlords, who own holiday houses or weekenders.

² The ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage provides a comprehensive measure of socio-economic outcomes within particular areas. The index value is used to order or rank areas in terms of advantage/disadvantage. The average index value for areas across Australia is 994. Hence an index value exceeding 994 indicates that an area is more advantaged than the Australian average, while a value of less than 994 indicates that an area is more disadvantaged than the Australian average (ABS 2004d). The value for populated coastal areas is 969 (Haberkorn et al 2004).



- Getaways tend to have a much higher median age than Australia overall and are aging at a much faster rate. The highest median ages are recorded in Victor Harbor (49 years, a change of 4 years between 1996 and 2001); Yorke Peninsula (45) and Bass Coast (43).
- Unemployment in Victorian, South Australian and Western Australian Coastal Getaways is below national and State averages. Unemployment is more significant in New South Wales and Queensland Getaways. All Queensland Getaway communities in the sample had unemployment rates greater than 10% in 2001.
- Most Getaways have lower median household incomes than Australia overall, with the lowest incomes recorded in the Bass Coast, Victor Harbor and Yorke Peninsula (\$400-\$499 per week compared to \$700-\$799 for Australia).
- Socio-economic indexes are lower than the national figure (of 994) for all Coastal Getaways in the sample, with the exception of Kiama (1044.9) and Surf Coast (1034.4).

Coastal Cities

- In this typology we identify Coastal Cities as substantial, predominantly contiguous urban conurbations with populations greater than 100,000. Coastal Cities include Newcastle in New South Wales, Cairns, Gold Coast and Maroochy in Queensland and Greater Geelong in Victoria. The rate of growth in these areas, while numerically substantial, is closer to State averages.
- Coastal Cities in the sample have a higher median age than Australia overall. The exception is Cairns, which in 2001 had a median age of 34 (compared to 35 for Australia). However, this median increased at twice the national rate.
- Retail is the largest single employer in the Coastal Cities of the sample, followed by manufacturing, health and community services and construction.
- Unemployment in all Coastal Cities was higher than the national average of 7.5%. In 2001, Maroochy (11.2%) and Newcastle (11.1%) had the highest rates of unemployment.
- Coastal Cities have lower median household incomes than Australia overall, with the exception of Cairns, where the median is \$700-\$799 (equivalent to the national median). Coastal Cities tended to have a slightly lower socio-economic index than Australia overall.

Coastal Lifestyle Destinations

- Coastal Lifestyle Destinations are local government areas located more than three hours drive from capital cities but otherwise have a similar settlement pattern to Coastal Getaways. They attract new residents and visitors for their lifestyle, leisure, and tourism appeal. Examples include Coffs Harbour, Byron, and Hastings Shires in New South Wales, Whitsunday in Queensland, and Moyne in Victoria.
- Most of these Lifestyle communities are experiencing more rapid population growth than national and State figures but in general this growth is lower than that of Coastal Getaways and Coastal Commuters.
- Coastal Lifestyle Destinations have significantly higher median ages than Australia overall. The highest median ages recorded in 2001 were Eurobodalla (44 years), Nambucca and Hastings (43 years). Exceptions are Thuringowa (30) and Warrnambool (34).
- Unemployment tends to be higher than in other types of sea change community, and many in the sample had employment rates above 10%. The northern New South Wales communities of Nambucca (18.3%), Kempsey (16.5%) and Byron (14.4%) had the highest rates of unemployment in 2001.
- Socio-economic indexes in all Coastal Lifestyle Destinations are lower than Australia overall. The lowest indexes are in Kempsey (886.9) and Nambucca (888.9), corresponding with high rates of unemployment in these communities.



Coastal Hamlets

- We use the term “Coastal Hamlet” to describe remote local government areas with small settlements and groupings of settlements³ located more than three hours from a capital city. Robe, and Grant in South Australia are examples, as are Augusta-Margaret River in Western Australia, Douglas in Queensland, and Bellingen in northern New South Wales.
- The relative isolation of Coastal Hamlets has meant that these places have escaped major development pressures to date. Many are also surrounded by conservation areas which act as a growth boundary. However, Coastal Hamlets are likely to be increasingly attractive to sea changers and tourists seeking alternatives to more populated and developed locations.
- Some Coastal Hamlets, especially Augusta-Margaret River and Douglas are already experiencing rapid growth (Augusta-Margaret River grew at an estimated 4.7% between 2002 and 2003 compared to 1.4% for Western Australia overall). As impacts on biodiversity, habitat, and landscape values are most significant during the early stages of development within an area, it is particularly important to manage processes of growth in these areas.
- Unemployment is lower in Coastal Hamlets than other types of sea change communities and all Hamlets in the sample had unemployment significantly below State rates, except the northern New South Wales community of Bellingen (14.6%).
- Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors remains important for these communities (34.6% of people are employment in this industry in Robe and 25% in Grant). However, employment in these industries generally declined between 1996-2001, particularly in Bellingen (-3.3%) and Robe (-2.5%). Exceptions are Augusta-Margaret River, where the sector increased by 1.2%, perhaps due to a growth in viticulture, and Grant (up 0.9%).

Policy and Planning Framework

This information (contained in Section 4 of the report) is drawn from an analysis of Commonwealth and State policies, strategies and legislation relating to the planning and management of Australia’s coastal areas, and a sample of six local planning instruments.

- Commonwealth, State and local policy and planning instruments addressing the sea change phenomenon focus on biophysical aspects, particularly environmental protection, and to a lesser degree, settlement structure and urban design. Social issues, such as building community cohesion, catering to the needs of aging populations, or housing affordability, are not well addressed within the scope of current policy or planning instruments.
- Similarly, although some planning instruments aim to preserve agricultural land or to provide for tourism development, economic goals are not well articulated or integrated within coastal policy and planning frameworks (though some of the local plans examined do contain economic objectives and strategies).
- This failure to integrate social and economic objectives and strategies within coastal policies and the land use plans applying to coastal areas reflects broader difficulties associated with achieving the spectrum of sustainability goals. Given the evidence of social and economic disadvantage in sea change localities, and the likelihood that such disadvantage will continue without effective interventions, broadening coastal policy and planning processes to properly include social and economic dimensions is a priority.

³ Some “coastal hamlets” may be located within more populated lifestyle destination areas (for example, towns like Yallingup in Margaret River and Laurieton in Hastings, but these are not analysed separately in this research).



- Effective regional planning is widely regarded by representatives of sea change communities to be critical to the management of growth and change in these areas. Many sea change communities report that existing regional plans lack weight, are not consistently applied, or are out of date.

Priorities for Policy Intervention and Research

The final section of the report (Section 5) summarises the priority planning issues affecting sea change communities.

Environment and Heritage

- Coastal environments are under major pressure. Environmental problems include habitat loss and fragmentation due to urban development and tourism, loss and degradation of coastal wetlands, change in hydrological systems and marine habitats, the introduction of exotic species, and erosion. Global climate change, particularly sea level rise is likely to impact coastal environments in the near future. Thus it is important for some form of monitoring effort to be incorporated in the planning process to provide updated information on ecological changes.
- There is a need to effectively protect the attributes of terrestrial and marine conservation areas and manage the impact of activities and development in surrounding lands on conservation values. This is of particular relevance to the many sea change communities defined by major protected landscapes.
- The distinctive rural character of coastal hinterlands is threatened by pressure for residential and rural residential subdivisions, particularly in Coastal Getaways and Coastal Lifestyle Destinations, but many councils lack strong statutory planning support to manage these processes. State governments should assist local councils in developing more effective approaches and recognise those that do a good job by both monetary and public awards programs.
- More research on existing and potential planning approaches to managing environmental pressures within coastal locations is needed, for instance, the viability of permanent urban growth boundaries, the potential application of tradable development rights, planning incentives for conservation, and voluntary conservation schemes.
- Local character or “sense of place” in smaller coastal communities is being overwhelmed by the scale and or pace of new residential and tourism developments (De Jong 2002; Green 2000). There is a lack of effective planning methodologies and tools to preserve and enhance the attributes of place (including cultural heritage sites, places for local recreation, contemplation and encounter) that are important to local residents. A good planning guide or handbook needs to be developed to assist communities in this sensitive planning process that does not merely miniaturise urban approaches but creates a fundamentally different framework for coastal community planning. Here the Coastal Design Guidelines for New South Wales provide a good starting point although the emphasis is limited to urban design and the physical planning of settlements.

Community Wellbeing

- As indicated earlier, many sea change communities are characterised by relatively high levels of socio economic disadvantage. There is a risk of significant social polarisation within sea change communities and at the regional scale as the gap widens between “cashed up” newcomers from the city and existing residents.
- A process of gentrification is apparent within some sea change communities; particularly Coastal Getaways and some Coastal Lifestyle Destinations, where demand for new housing and holiday accommodation reduces affordable housing opportunities or creates seasonal shortage. More research on housing market dynamics in coastal locations, the process of gentrification and displacement of lower income groups, and potential response mechanisms, is needed to understand and address this issue. A Sea Change Housing Indicator report might be implemented in each state, perhaps in collaboration with the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).



- The increasing transience of sea change communities, (shorter term stays, absentee landlords, loss of repeat visitors) is affecting Coastal Getaways and Coastal Lifestyle Destinations. Many of these areas are reporting loss of a sense of community. There are tensions between existing residents and newcomers, particularly within smaller Coastal Getaways, Coastal Lifestyle Destinations and Coastal Hamlets (National Sea Change Taskforce, August 2004).
- Residents of sea change areas cherish the unique lifestyle and amenity of living on the coast. Certain coastal communities, especially Getaways, Coastal Lifestyle Destinations, and Coastal Hamlets, are particularly valued for offering a low key semi rural lifestyle with traditionally strong social networks. Residents of these places currently fear that these qualities are threatened by rapid population increases or very high numbers of tourists.

Economy / Tourism

- Population growth has correlated with increased development activity and reduced levels of unemployment in most of the sea change communities included in the sample. However, national unemployment rates have also fallen. It is clear that the short term development activities associated with population growth will not lead to a self sustaining economy over time. As a result, new local economic development strategies must be designed to build on local natural resources while establishing links to the international economy.
- In particular, Coastal Getaway communities experience distortion of their local economies due to ongoing connections with metropolitan areas, principally from commuters, retirees, and second home buyers (O'Connor 2004). These connections include higher land values as local residents compete in the housing market with "cashed up" newcomers from the city; city dwellers who are able to purchase a weekender while remaining based in the city; and partial commuters or telecommuters whose income flows from the city. Thus it is important for communities to devise "affordable housing" and related schemes that help maintain socio-economic balance. Communities should be assisted by the States to establish and resource non profit housing organisations in regional areas for this purpose.
- Many sea change communities (particularly Coastal Lifestyle Destinations and Coastal Hamlets) are experiencing a decline in traditional resourced based industries, like agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Specific strategies are needed to assist councils manage this process of transition and its impact on the environmental quality and character of their communities. This may include the development of strategies to retain and enhance productive industries in agriculture, fisheries and sustainable forestry, while establishing new conservation, knowledge, culture, tourism, and service based opportunities catering to national and international markets.
- There is pressure within tourism based communities to continue to renew and upgrade tourism infrastructure to remain competitive tourism destinations. At the same time, there is tension between tourists and local residents who regard high and seasonal visitor populations as a threat to community cohesion and the amenity values of the locality. New tourism strategies need to be examined to ensure that tourism activities produce real economic returns for communities.

Infrastructure

- All councils report infrastructure shortfalls and lack the capacity to finance these shortfalls through existing sources (grants, rates, and developer contributions). There is a clear need and substantial pressure from new residents for services and infrastructure comparable to that of metropolitan areas.
- Actual infrastructure gaps include insufficient physical infrastructure for existing and future population and visitor needs (roads, sewer, water services, and public transport). Smaller population centres experience a shortage of social, professional and health services, and a lack of education and training opportunities. They also express a need for new technological and communications infrastructure. Long term infrastructure plans – covering a 15-25 year time span need to be crafted for each of these communities, with State government assistance and a subsequent commitment of up front funding to implement these plans. Such plans should be closely linked to regional settlement and environmental planning processes.



- Infrastructure provision in areas with high seasonal visitation must be adequate for periods of peak demand although many local government areas lack the sufficient rate base or developer contributions framework to finance this level of service. Again, a long term plan needs to be developed to meet both peak and regular demands.

Governance

- Sea change localities are subject to complicated, cross jurisdictional planning and management processes relating to coastal management and protection, natural resource management and heritage conservation (in addition to core land use planning and development responsibilities). Therefore mechanisms to combine planning, natural resource management and conservation systems need to be devised by each State – perhaps through consolidated legislation and planning policy administered by State governments but implemented by appropriately resourced local councils.
- This approach is consistent with a place based form of governance for coastal communities. A place based approach is likely to be most responsive to the multiple environmental, social, cultural and economic issues faced by coastal councils, however, is very difficult to achieve within current administrative arrangements. Thus we suggest a more coordinated process rather than a new layer of government.
- A cooperative approach between councils at regional and sub regional levels is needed to pursue effective settlement strategies in high growth coastal destinations. Yet few councils report established processes for regional collaboration. Although there are provisions for regional planning in most State coastal policies (see below), few States actually have completed regional plans in place.
- Smaller councils lack sufficient numbers of professional staff to manage the multi-dimensional nature of rapid change in coastal areas. Many coastal councils that have escaped rapid growth pressures report that they do not have adequate planning controls in place to manage recent upsurges in population. These councils need State government assistance to strengthen their planning frameworks and establish supportive processes with other local government areas in the region.

Priorities to Enhance Local and Regional Planning in Sea Change Communities of Coastal Australia

The research presented here points to a number of immediate priorities to enhance local and regional planning in sea change communities of coastal Australia.

- There is a need for a national framework to lead coastal policy, establish strategic responses to population growth in coastal regions, and to support and resource regional and local coastal planning initiatives. Suitable models for emulation exist in the United Kingdom, United States and European Union.
- There are plenty of State level objectives and guidelines for managing growth in coastal areas – however, it is not clear that these are being implemented. There is a need to evaluate the implementation of this policy framework and expand it to address the full spectrum of issues affecting the diversity of sea change communities in Australia.
- There is an urgent need to support local governments in:-
 - further developing appropriate skills and expertise to address the complex challenges associated with coastal growth;
 - establishing and resourcing appropriate strategies for necessary infrastructure provision linked to desired settlement patterns and future character;
 - connecting economic and social strategies with physical planning processes and decisions; and,
 - establishing effective processes for regional or sub regional cooperation.
- Many local governments have developed innovative ways to address aspects of the sea change phenomenon but this work has occurred in isolation. There is a need to audit, build on, and share this work with other sea change communities.



Priorities for Further Research

Additional research is also needed to fully address the challenges associated with demographic change in Australia's coastal regions.

- Research on national and international models of best practice in planning for and managing growth in sensitive environmental settings is required. This research should emphasise opportunities for application in the spectrum of sea change communities in Australia. (This will form stage two of the National Sea Change Taskforce research project).
- Further research on current planning practice and opportunities for enhancement, particularly with respect to policy guidance and regulatory controls; integration of coastal management urban planning and biodiversity conservation processes; information sources and decision support tools, structures for community participation and collaborative relationships is needed. This research should focus on the potential for a "place building" methodology to assist coastal communities respond to rapid change while preserving and enhancing local character, social capital and environmental integrity.
- Further research on social conditions in sea change communities, particularly socio-economic polarisation, is a priority. Little is known about the process of gentrification in non metropolitan settings and research should focus on how to design environmentally sensitive growth management strategies that do not result in the displacement of lower income residents.
- Research on forms of local economic development suitable for non metropolitan communities subject to high environmental conservation constraints is also important. This research should identify strategies to manage economic transition from resource based industries to conservation, knowledge, culture, tourism, and service based opportunities, and economic opportunities that depend on, and thus seek to preserve, the unique attributes of place as a basis for economic competitiveness.