

**Newcastle Greens Policy on
Protecting Newcastle's Coast and Waterways**
Enjoying a clean and natural coastal environment



Newcastle is rightly famous for its great surfing beaches and ocean baths in the heart of the city. However, they are under threat from rising sea levels, coastal erosion, plastic pollution and proposals for offshore mining.

The Hunter estuary includes a large area of wetlands from Stockton and Kooragang Island to Shortland, Hexham, Maryland and Minmi. For millennia the river and wetlands supported a large Aboriginal population, and their campsites, pathways, quarries and ceremonial sites once dotted the landscape. The estuary is home to endangered migratory and local birds, as well as being a significant fish and prawn nursery, and is protected in National Parks, Nature Reserves and by international treaties.

The city is criss-crossed by a system of urban streams such as Ironbark and Throsby Creeks that carry urban run-off. They range from natural creeks to concrete channels, and they vary in their capacity to perform the functions expected of healthy waterways – carrying run-off, directing and storing floodwaters, supporting aquatic ecosystems, and removing water pollutants.

Living close to the water is generally desirable, as indicated by the price of waterfront properties. But it also brings exposure to hazards such as coastal erosion and flooding from stormwater, the river and tides. These hazards are predicted to become more frequent and more severe as the climate changes and sea levels rise. They have the potential to affect more than 11,000 properties across the Newcastle Local Government Area.

Newcastle Greens believe that, with proper management and planning coupled with an urgent response to the climate emergency, these natural areas can be protected while residents continue to live beside them in safety.

Newcastle Greens will work with the community to:

Reduce coastal erosion by:

- Lobbying for an immediate increase to \$100 million in annual State Government Coastal Management funding to Local Government and community projects (from approx. \$20m currently)
- Ensuring access to emergency funding from the NSW Government to respond immediately to future storm damage at Stockton and other beaches
- Adopting a long-term plan for the stabilisation of Stockton Beach involving a combination of sand nourishment and sand containment as recommended in the Coastal Zone Management Plan and lobbying the NSW Government and Port Corporation to contribute funds sufficient to allow Council to carry out and maintain the necessary infrastructure and works
- Develop a detailed program for city beaches south of the harbour to prepare for and begin managing beach erosion due to rising sea levels and changed storm conditions

Maintain free public access to the coast by:

- Opposing the privatisation of public land and public assets along the coast, either by sale or long-term lease
- Maintaining free public access to coastal venues such as beaches, parks, pavilions and baths
- Ensuring that redevelopment of public facilities such as the Ocean Baths and Surf Clubs improves public services such as change-rooms, provides full disability access, and does not allocate space for

exclusive private use

- Returning Nobbys Beach, Horseshoe Beach and the Harbour Foreshore to year-round public use by not renewing the Supercars Services Deed after 2022
- Identifying, protecting and ensuring cultural access to significant Aboriginal sites and landscapes on our coast and waterways

Keep our beaches and ocean free from pollution by:

- Opposing seismic testing and the development of a gas field off our coast and opposing planning permission for onshore support infrastructure
- Continuing support for volunteers such as clean-up, coast-care and dune-care groups
- Banning non-essential single-use plastic items such as drinking straws and plastic bags

Adapt to the risks of flooding and rising sea levels by:

- Immediately implementing the city's low-lying areas strategy to protect harbourside suburbs from flooding and rising sea levels
- Implementing the recommendations of the Wallsend Commercial Centre Flood Study to reduce flash flooding along Ironbark Creek, particularly in the Wallsend shopping centre
- Using a partnership between Council, Hunter Water and local communities to re-naturalise streams and wetlands to decrease flooding, improve water quality, and increase biodiversity

Avoid the increase in coastal hazards from a changing climate by:

- Promoting in the staged closure of coal exports from the Port of Newcastle by:
 - Not extending the Carrington (T1) coal loader's licence when it expires in 2024
 - Establishing new uses for the port such as a rail-supported container terminal and a suitably located purpose-built cruise terminal
 - Establishing national and state schemes to provide funds and other support to industries and workers affected by the transition to a clean economy
- Opposing any new coal mines
- Opposing proposals for a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal in the Port of Newcastle

Use the value of our natural assets to improve the environment and promote leisure and tourism by:

- Supporting development of local ecotourism based on the natural values of coastal and wetland reserves and supporting the continued operation of the Hunter Wetland Centre
- Continuing to work with developers and Hunter Water to reduce urban stormwater run-off and improve water quality in local creeks through water-sensitive urban design

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For more information about Newcastle Greens policies, visit www.newcastlegreens.org.au/policies or contact our Councillors.