



Marine Estate  
Management Authority

A NEW APPROACH TO MANAGING THE NSW MARINE ESTATE

# Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

## Marine Estate Management Authority

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## Contents

1. Introduction/Background	1
A new approach to marine estate management	1
2. Community and Stakeholder Engagement	3
Principles of Community and Stakeholder Engagement	3
Public Participation	4
1. Early public engagement	4
2. Targeted stakeholder input	4
3. Community consultation	4
3. Communications	4
Communication Tools	5
Media protocols	5
4. Stakeholders	5
Peak bodies	6
5. Risk Management	6
6. Strategy Evaluation	6
Appendix 1	7
Appendix 2	10

## 1. Introduction/Background

This Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy details the rationale and approach the Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA or the Authority) will take towards engagement, public participation and communication activities with the wide range of stakeholders across the NSW marine estate.

This strategy has been developed with consideration of the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW recommendations, a summary of community engagement recommendations from the audit is at Appendix 1.

### A new approach to marine estate management

The Government Response to the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW was announced on 12 March 2013.

The [media release](#) announcing the response outlined that the Government accepts the Audit's two principal recommendations as cornerstones of the new approach to marine estate management in NSW. These are to: reorganise management of the marine estate under a single new authority; and establish an independent scientific committee to support evidence based decision making.

The two new advisory bodies depicted in Figure 1 below and are the:

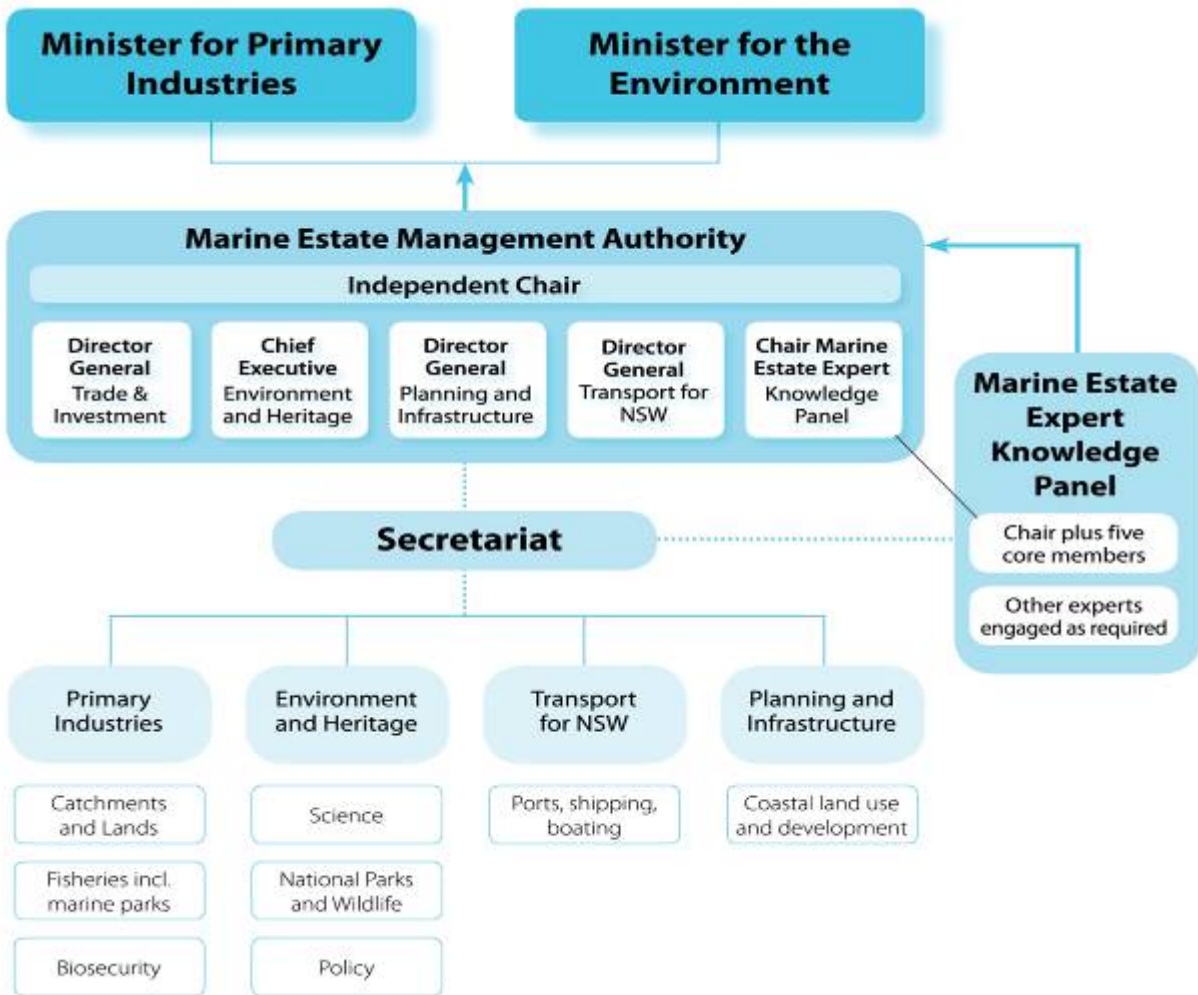
- [Marine Estate Management Authority](#)
- [Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel](#).

The Authority's role is to oversee and provide advice to government on the management of the entire NSW marine estate as a single continuous system. The Authority will set strategic direction and priorities through a Marine Estate Management Strategy and will oversee Strategy implementation by service delivery agencies. The Authority is an advisory body and the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for the Environment retain decision making responsibilities.

Membership of the Authority includes the following (or their delegates):

1. an independent Chair
2. Director General – Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services (NSW Trade & Investment)
3. Chief Executive – Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH)
4. Director General – Department of Planning and Infrastructure
5. Director General – Transport for NSW
6. Chair – Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel.

Figure 1. Marine estate advisory bodies



The Government's vision for the marine estate is for:

**a clean, safe, healthy, biologically diverse and productive NSW marine estate, enjoyed, valued and sustainably managed to balance economic growth and environmental protection and deliver long term benefits to NSW, its people, regions and industries.**

The new approach is underpinned by the Authority's vision to have a:

**healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest well-being of the community, now and into the future.**

The Authority paper *Managing the NSW Marine Estate: Purpose, Underpinning Principles and Priority Setting* (November 2013) outlines the vision, principles and processes the Authority will use in advising the NSW Government on the management of the marine estate.

## 2. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Following announcement of the Government response to the audit the Chair of the Authority and the Chair of the Expert Knowledge Panel met with a number of key marine estate stakeholders.

Consultation with stakeholders and the community will continue to occur as the NSW marine reforms are implemented.

A [summary of consultation and engagement](#) has been created and published to the marine website. This register is periodically updated and provides a summary of meetings undertaken to date by the two Chairs.

Independent advice will also be sought regarding improving community consultation and engagement processes across the priority projects.

Engagement will be required on a project-by-project basis and it is expected that some engagement will involve independent facilitators or be undertaken by independent consultants. Other engagement activities will be undertaken by staff in the central Marine Parks and Aquatic Reserves Program or by local marine park staff when required for park based initiatives.

Priority projects identified in the Government response will have a specific internal engagement plan which will detail public participation and communication activities.

The priority projects are:

- Development of a threat and risk assessment framework
- Assessment of recreational fishing access on ocean beaches and headlands in marine park sanctuary zones
- Pilot the new approach to marine park management planning at Batemans and Solitary Islands marine parks
- Proposed new marine legislation, the Marine Estate Management Act
- Development of a Marine Estate Management Strategy.

### Principles of Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Authority has seven over-arching principles for community and stakeholder engagement.

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>1. Participation</b>     | The community and stakeholders will have the opportunity to be engaged in decisions about the NSW marine estate that will affect their lives |
| <b>2. Early Involvement</b> | The community and stakeholders will be involved early in the decision-making process   |
| <b>3. Communication</b>     | Communication to the community and stakeholders will be clear, consistent, and accurate and use a variety of channels/methods                |
| <b>4. Accessibility</b>     | Information provided to the community and stakeholders will be 'easy to read and to understand'  |
| <b>5. Proportionate</b>     | Community and stakeholder engagement in decisions is to be proportionate to the scope of the proposed decision                               |

- 6. Transparency** Decisions will be made in an open and transparent way and provide the community and stakeholders with reasons for their decisions, including how their views have been taken into account
- 7. Evaluation** Engagement activities will be monitored and evaluated to adaptively manage future public participation and communication activities

### Public Participation

Public participation is any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions. Public participation includes all aspects of identifying problems and opportunities, developing alternatives and making decisions.

(International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), 2006)

Consultation is just one process to the engage the public and is conducted to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

The process for public participation will be determined using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Appendix 2). The spectrum identifies five processes to engage the public in participation: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. This will help to explicitly consider the public participation goal and promise made to the public for each process.

The following have been identified as the ideal steps to be followed when planning public participation on priority projects:

#### 1. Early public engagement

The public will be engaged early through information sharing, consultation and awareness raising processes including through surveys, uploaded documentation to the website and opportunities for public feedback/input.

#### Marine estate community survey

The Authority will begin to engage the community and stakeholders through a broad marine estate community survey. The purpose of the survey is to understand the views of the community regarding the NSW marine estate given that people's values, beliefs and attitudes influence how they respond to the world around them. The results of this survey will be used to inform and guide the priority projects for the marine estate.

#### 2. Targeted stakeholder input

Stakeholders will be engaged through direct contact to ensure their concerns and feedback are understood and considered, for example through interviews, meetings and workshops. This process will also gather and utilise the diverse sources of stakeholder knowledge to assist in the development of management options and other key decisions relating to their issues of concern and/or local area.

#### 3. Community consultation

The community will be consulted to obtain feedback on proposed/draft Government analysis, options and/or decisions, such as on draft plans through direct contact or websites.

### 3. Communications

## Communication Tools

The full range of communication tools are available to the Authority and will be chosen depending on audience, topic and purpose of communications. Communication tools available include:

- emails
- phone calls
- letters
- information materials – factsheets, brochures, diagrams etc.
- websites
- public comment, surveys
- information sessions, face-to-face
- media releases
- workshops, face-to-face, focus groups

The marine website [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au) will be a key tool for the Authority to communicate with stakeholders and the community and make information publicly available.

Following each Authority meeting a meeting summary which outlines the key items discussed will be available on the website.

As indicated in the Government response to the audit all formal Expert Knowledge Panel advice will be made public. It is expected this will be through the marine estate website at [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au).

Formal Authority advice to Ministers, for example with recommendations relating to priority projects, will also be made public primarily through the marine estate website at [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au).

The Authority will publicly report on implementation of the new approach to managing the NSW marine estate through an annual progress report.

## Media protocols

As described in the Authority's [protocol manual](#) all Authority media matters will be managed in collaboration with the NSW Trade & Investment media and communications unit, for example developing media releases, communications material and liaison with Ministerial media advisors.

The Authority welcomes appropriate media opportunities as a way of fostering transparency, community understanding and engagement.

Authority members are expected to abide by the [NSW Trade & Investment media policy](#). This media policy applies to all forms of media interaction including verbal, written or electronic and across various media platforms including print, online and radio.

The Chair will be the Authority spokesperson for all media enquiries, unless other arrangements are made.

## 4. Stakeholders

There are a wide range of NSW marine estate stakeholders.

Stakeholders are those groups who affect and/or could be affected by our activities, products or services and associated performance.

### **Peak bodies**

Peak bodies will be used as target stakeholders for communication activities and stakeholder input processes. Peak bodies selected as target stakeholders are likely to include the following interest groups:

- Aboriginal
- Boating
- Business
- Charter Operators
- Commercial fishing
- Conservation
- Education
- Environment
- Ports and shipping
- Recreational fishing
- Scientific Association
- Scientific Research
- SCUBA diving
- Tourism

## **5. Risk Management**

Risks will be evaluated and matters dealt with on a case-by-case basis at a departmental level, particularly if related to operational matters.

Where appropriate, matters will be escalated to the Authority Chair, Expert Knowledge Panel Chair, and/or members of those advisory bodies.

If necessary, the Authority Chair will have an opportunity to raise matters with Ministers through regular Ministerial updates.

## **6. Strategy Evaluation**

The success of this communications strategy can be evaluated through measures such as:

- feedback from Ministerial Offices
- feedback from the public
- level and nature of media coverage and accuracy of media reporting
- representativeness of stakeholder and community input/submissions
- stakeholder attendance at face to face events.



## Appendix 1

### Report of the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW – Summary of community and stakeholder engagement recommendations

Beeton RJS, Buxton CD, Cutbush GC, Fairweather PG, Johnston EL & Ryan R (2012) [Report of the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in New South Wales](#). NSW Department of Primary Industries and Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW. Pp. 1-124

#### Stakeholder engagement and public participation

- Some submissions to the Audit claimed that stakeholders have been largely alienated from the Marine Parks Authority planning processes, due to problems with the processes:
  - ‘over-consulting’ without clear outcomes
  - public participation processes being used as a proxy for social research
  - lack of quality input from the science to enable educated and informed engagement
  - and a lack of transparency around why and how decisions have been made by not closing the feedback loop
  
- The principles for quality public participation adopted for management of NSW marine parks should ensure that:
  - Public participation is a process that does not drive a predetermined outcome
  - There is a clear understanding of what the process can and cannot influence
  - Engagement of key stakeholders occurs early and regularly
  - There is feedback regarding what inputs are considered and those that are not
  - There is educated and expert informed engagement to ensure that those stakeholders who influence the processes are well informed
  - There is particular attention given to expert and local indigenous knowledge as part of zoning and management processes
  - There is full transparency in processes
  - Engagement is linked with, but separate to, communication and community education
  
- Key stakeholder groups should be engaged in a participatory way in all stages of the process to enhance their involvement in the management of biodiversity and reduce the need for compliance processes
  
- Need to link the public participation phases of the planning process with the development of socio-economic reports
  
- Public participation is a means of informing and guiding social research and social impact assessment, but it should be independent of both

An example of reasonably successful participatory process has been undertaken in the GBRMP, where successful engagement was achieved by:

- engaging early in the process by collaborating with organisations to build trust
  - ensuring scientific questions have direct relevance to the community
  - providing appropriate incentives for participation
  - clear and open communication
- Importance of establishing a culture of transparent, scientifically justified decisions that begins with a very clear understanding, by all parties, of the motivation and justification for the parks in the first place
  - The *Marine Parks Authority Communications Education Strategy 2009–2012* (MPA 2009160) provides a useful foundation from which to build public support for aquatic conservation and to include the views of the community in marine park management. This strategy provides a framework for a statewide focus on communications that seeks to engage the community to take action towards conserving marine biodiversity
  - It would be of benefit if public participation were more clearly separated from communications, and the management of the public participation process were independent of marine park management

## Appendix 6: Some social science approaches

### Public Participation

**What:** An independent, voluntary, transparent, representative and accountable process offering a range of strategies to invite input, feedback and ideas on issues of interest. It is process focussed and does not assume an outcome. Good public participation ensures participants are clear about what can and cannot be influenced during the process. It is different from communications (and should not be managed by communications teams) and does not have an advocacy focus.

**Why:** To identify key issues, values and concerns: to inform planning, design and analysis; to strengthen outcomes that respond to stated needs and requirements

**When:** At all stages; however, early involvement in key decision making process is most effective

**How:** Activities depend on the purpose of engagement. These can include a combination of activities for breadth (communications, websites, newsletters, CIFS, community 'pop ups', telephone surveys, online panels, social media etc) and depth (focus groups, workshops, deliberative panels/citizens juries, stakeholder briefings, community reference groups and advisory groups etc.)

### Communications

**What:** Strategies to disseminate information, key messages, profiling and publicity

**Why:** To communicate key messages and issues broadly, may have issues management/advocacy focus

**When:** At all stages

**How:** Fact sheets, letters, briefings, websites, media releases, media monitoring, good news stories, social media

### **Education for sustainability**

What: Disseminate information, raise awareness, knowledge and understanding regarding key issues

Why: Promote desired behaviours and actions

When: At all stages

How: Depends on target groups and issue; strategies are often informed by social marketing research that examines communications preferences and tests for reach, relevance and recall. Online, paper-based, experiential, participatory, and electronic media.

## Appendix 2

### IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

#### INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>Example techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberative polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus-building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decision</li> </ul>

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