

# CLEAN BEACHES – CONNECTING OUR COAST



## Introduction

Keep Australia Beautiful NSW is one of Australia's leading community-focused environmental organisations, with more than 35 years of experience and success in fostering grass-roots efforts to preserve and enhance the natural environment.

Through our core programs, we educate, motivate, and advocate for greater environmental awareness and sustainable outcomes. As an organisation we support and celebrate councils, communities and businesses making a positive difference.

The Clean Beach Challenge has been a successful program of Keep Australia Beautiful NSW since its inception in 2001. The annual awards are eagerly anticipated by regular participants. Submissions are assessed on the ground and awards occur in 7 categories, across 9 geographic regions along the coast. These winners are then assessed for state titles, and the NSW Overall Clean Beach becomes a National Finalist. The Australian Overall Clean Beach has been awarded to a NSW beach on three occasions; 2004/5 Ned's Beach Lord Howe Island, 2006/7 Toowoona Bay, 2008/9 North Steyne.

In 2010, a new name and logo is being launched – Clean Beaches. This re-branding brings a unique opportunity to revitalise this program, encourage coastal community cohesion, drive new community projects and increase engagement in activities which benefit the coastline. The initiative will create structure in the form of a committee for coastal communities. These Clean Beaches Committees will bring together diverse interest groups to share their knowledge, skills and resources. These groups have a shared value of the coastal environment. There is an exciting opportunity for these committees to identify local issues, build community cohesion and work together, driving new projects. There is great strength in partnerships and the vision of Connecting Our Coastline is about harnessing that potential.

For ease of usage the term 'Clean Beaches Committee' is used. It should be noted that these partnership initiatives may in fact have any name given by the participants, such as network, coalition, collective, connection etc. The groups formed will determine their own scope, structure, membership and mode of operation.

The Clean Beaches 2010 program is partnered by the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), and Sydney Water.



Environment,  
Climate Change  
& Water

our environment *it's a living thing*

Sydney  
**WATER**

## **Program Rationale and Development**

### ***User pressures***

Over a third of the State's population, or nearly two and a half million people, live in local government areas with ocean and estuary frontage. The impact of this high residential population is compounded by high visitation rates. Our love of the coastline for holidays and single day excursions results in more pressure on the natural environment, as well as increased commercial usage of this zone.

Feedback from stakeholders indicates that community tension is building in some localities. The many different groups which engage with the beach often do so with regard only to their own activity. Communication about, and management of beach environments has become compromised.

Examples include:

- The valuable work done by Dunecare groups may be undermined (literally) by fitness trainers
- Surf education instructors often pitch marquees in inappropriate locations
- Mature plantings on foredunes may now prevent line-of-sight for the Surf Club
- Increased use by commercial operators requires appropriate management.

There is an identified need to bring the various groups together to share information and planning.

### ***Legislative pressures***

The entire NSW coast has been defined and mapped by a coastal zone. In Sydney, the coastal zone generally covers land back to one block inland from the coast and includes foreshore public lands. Outside Sydney the zone stretches a kilometre back from the shoreline, and also includes foreshore public lands.

DECCW's coastal zone management program aims to reduce the impact of coastal hazards and maintain the ecological health of our estuaries while accommodating population growth. The program has a long history of state and local government working collaboratively on coastal zone management. Under the Coastal Protection Act, coastal zone management plans can address both coastal areas and estuaries.

At the time of writing there are a number of forthcoming coastal management documents. The final Coastal Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2010 and its associated Minister's requirements and guidelines will impact significantly on planning issues. Consultation drafts are currently available.

Coastal erosion, climate variability, sea level rise and significant weather events are causing major planning issues that will need appropriate, meaningful and inclusive community consultation and management. Residents, tourism operators, developers, and councils are some of the relevant stakeholders.

## ***Holistic approach***

This community consultation and engagement must take a holistic approach. The Clean Beaches program has been developed to facilitate this.

Active and concerned residents will be brought together via Clean Beaches Committees. Residents will have an opportunity to channel their energy together to manage appropriate coastal projects. Diverse community groups, including businesses and tourism promoters, as well as individuals, councils, state government departments and Local Aboriginal Land Councils will be able to contribute and share knowledge, experience and resources. The present 'silo effect' of user groups not relating to one another will be greatly reduced if not eliminated, replaced with a collaborative structure producing viable, sustainable planning and outcomes.



The logo to accompany the new program name highlights the beach as the interface between the marine and the hinterland ecosystems, and clearly shows human interaction with these environments. This whole coastal zone is the focus of Clean Beaches. This is consistent with the NSW Government Coastal Zone, and reflects the increasing awareness of the need for community-based integrated planning and projects.

The vision of Clean Beaches – Connecting Our Coast will facilitate integration of disparate stakeholder groups and achieve an issues-driven community-based approach to Coastal Zone management.

## **Stakeholder Feedback**

Widespread stakeholder consultation occurred which confirmed the current lack of collaboration, sharing of information and resources between existing groups. For example, it appears that quite often an Estuary Advisory Committee may exist, and the Dunecare groups meet quarterly, yet there is no synergy or exchange between these two organisations. This results in incomplete information, leading to reduced quality of planning and outcomes. The concept of changing this situation by forming collaborative networks or committees was regarded as very positive, with many potential opportunities and benefits. Many stakeholders commented 'This is just what is needed!'

## ***Opportunities and benefits***

Opportunities and benefits fall into three broad categories: Financial, Social and Environmental. There is overlap among these categories as a number of single benefits could easily be seen as having advantages in more than one area, and categorising them

is an arbitrary exercise. Any opportunity or benefit will ultimately lead to flow-on effects and benefits in other areas.

It was also noted that major funding bodies are now giving preference to partnership projects.

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Financial</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Environmental</b>
Increased tourism	✓		
Market and promote the things that are done	✓		
Utilise community services section within council	✓	✓	
Council would be a good lead agency	✓		
Stronger financial base	✓		
Issues can be built into a Catchment Action Plan and then relevant projects can be funded eg marine debris data - protect marine habitat	✓		✓
Share resources/Information	✓	✓	✓
Restructure local committees eg landcare group link with estuary management committee, become coastal management	✓	✓	✓
CMA funding must go to NRM	✓		✓
Utilise internet for ideas/communication/learning eg blogs	✓	✓	
Community building		✓	
Social connectivity		✓	
Enhance sense of ownership		✓	
Acknowledge volunteers		✓	
Pull information from council plans – 2 way exchange between council and community to eliminate 'missing link'- information goes back to council also		✓	
Holistic approach – all pull in one direction		✓	
Program ambassador /champion – pulling power		✓	
Increased membership	✓	✓	✓
Strength in collaboration		✓	
Shining light example – everyone learns eg via newsletter		✓	
Awards go to your beach – sell community ownership		✓	
Develop precinct committee system		✓	
Activities for older people to suit needs and OHS requirements		✓	
Active After School programs		✓	
Lead individual can pull groups together – then council works with them		✓	
Reward people for doing the right thing, rather than regulatory all the time		✓	
Use the environment to establish community cohesion which is currently lacking		✓	✓
Integrated planning – new model – environment is everyone's business	✓	✓	✓
Less litter	✓		✓
Educative component to projects			✓
Education at an event		✓	✓
All want to look after beach – protect what you've got			✓
Good to recognise unknown individual – eg picks up rubbish		✓	✓
Schools involved		✓	✓
Don't just use it – improve it!	✓	✓	✓

**Table 1. Opportunities and benefits to establishing Clean Beaches Committees.**

Community and social opportunities and benefits are dominant in this initiative. It is predominantly a social development program, with the significant outcome of increased social capital. Social Capital is the level of cohesion, goodwill, sharing and interactions within a community. It is evident through the resilience of a community during challenges. The local population is the immediate beneficiary, and the Coastal Zone is the environmental beneficiary.

### **Barriers**

Barriers to establishing networks of coastal groups full into three broad categories: Resources, Organisational/Structural, and Personal/Interpersonal parameters. The last of these categories held the greatest amount of concern for stakeholders. It is the area that requires most analysis and management in establishing Clean Beach Committees. Motivation, goodwill and a safe social environment must be established at the outset and maintained with skilled facilitation and mediation where needed.

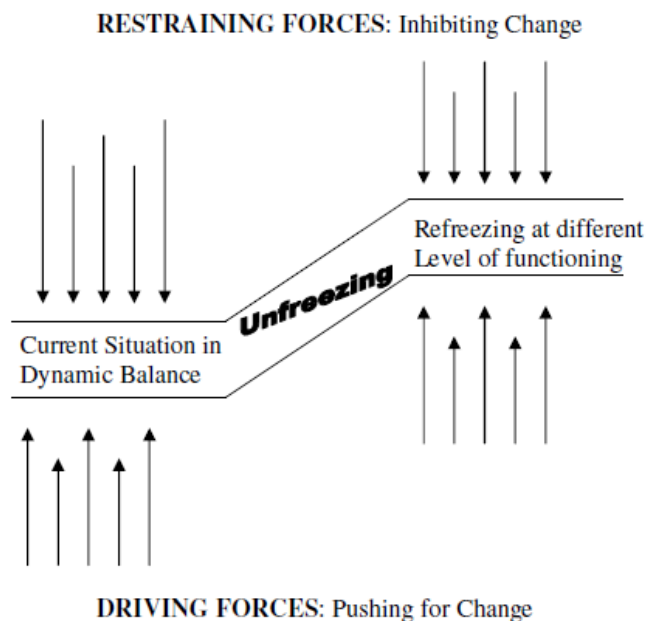
<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Organisational/ Structural</b>	<b>Personal/ Interpersonal</b>
Time, commitment, people, funding required	✓		
Communication	✓		
Groups see paperwork as a task	✓		
Funding – projects, coordinator	✓		
Land tenure, different responsibilities		✓	
Risk of identity of groups being absorbed and lost		✓	
Policy differences between groups eg herbicide use		✓	
Groups are pigeon-holed into specific interests		✓	
Council is seen as regulator		✓	
Unmanageable if too big		✓	
Impartial chair/management		✓	
Basic conflict between user groups, hard to resolve; Territorial			✓
Volunteer fragility			✓
A high profile individual can lead to intimidation of others: Domination			✓
Community groups want input to be accepted, but not necessarily contribute			✓
Apathy - Lack of knowledge of other groups			✓
Difficulty of succession – older people (don't like change)			✓
Engagement of new groups/individuals			✓
What's in it for me?			✓

**Table 2. Barriers to establishing Clean Beaches Committees.**

The organisational and personal matters initially identified as barriers, can become opportunities or benefits as community cohesion deepens, projects are accepted and funded appropriately, and reward and recognition follows.

## **Force Field Analysis**

Any situation is kept at a given level in a dynamic balance by the restraining forces, not the driving forces (Lewin). Without intervention the perceived personal and interpersonal barriers to the proposed Clean Beach Committees model are likely to constrain the drivers and maintain the current situation. It is the perception of the barriers that must be the beginning point of change. The task is to lessen these perceived difficulties, 'unfreeze' the situation, and allow the positive drivers to raise the level of functioning. It is counter productive to work only with the positive driving forces for change.



**Figure 1. Force Field Analysis**

To reduce the perceived personal/interpersonal barriers a change tool is needed which allows participants to identify shared values and objectives. A facilitated workshop has been selected as the appropriate tool to encourage these discussions and allow changes to occur. The workshops use the 'Action Conversation' model as put forward by Les Robinson (2010).

## **Making the Connections**

Clean Beaches Committees will ideally comprise a cross-section of people from the community who can contribute diverse experiences and knowledge about their local environment. The aim of the committee is to identify areas for improvement in the locality, then utilise the shared information, resources, and skills to drive new projects. It is important that this initiative be taken up at the grass-roots community level. By the nature of the task, it is likely to be an issues or theme based group.

Councils are the interface between the community and legislation, and it may be appropriate for councils to take a lead agency role in a Clean Beaches Committee

initiative. However councils have varying relationships with their communities, varying staffing and funding levels, and varying priorities and pressures. In some cases councils are viewed only as regulators, or, as only 'talking to the community when they want something'. In many instances, the lead role might well be taken by another organisation such as a Chamber of Commerce, a SLSC, or a dynamic individual.

## **Workshops**

Representatives from all coastal stakeholder groups have been invited to participate in a facilitated workshop within their own locality. These workshops aim to bring together such groups as: Councils, MPs, Coastal CMAs, Dunecare groups, SLSCs, APOLA, tourism operators, commercial users of the coastal zone, professional and recreational fishers, LALCs, schools, Surfrider foundation, 4WD clubs, etc.

The 'Action Conversation' workshop is a simple model with three parts: Hook, Discussion and Plan. It is based on the premise that every great environmental campaign, revolution or social change started with a conversation between two or a few people.

The Hook gives people something positive and stimulating to talk about. Local, expert guest speakers will provide the Hook by describing successful environmental networks and what they have achieved. The Discussion phase is a series of open-ended questions to take people on a journey from passion to action.

The formula is:

A heart question → A head question → A hands question.

Heart questions reveal people's passions. Head questions get them thinking practically about what could solve the problem. Hands questions ask them to imagine themselves being part of the solution. A scribe is needed to write down the points being made during a conversation.

As soon as people have begun to identify specific actions that interest them, they are buddied-up in groups of 2, 3, 4, or 5. The buddy groups help each other make an action Plan on *how* to carry out their desired action. The action plan is reported to the whole room, and acknowledged.

The facilitator or another agreed person follows up these public commitments with each participant and team. This is a simple yet critical stage. It is the best way to monitor and evaluate, determining just how much action has actually occurred as a result of the conversation.

This model has been successfully implemented in many community change situations, and has been used frequently by the Australian Conservation Foundation. It provides mechanisms that allow stakeholders to see that perceived barriers may not be as great as thought initially.

## ***Replication***

An action conversation can happen wherever people come together. It is therefore a model which can be readily adapted by workshop attendees and utilised in a variety of ways: meeting over coffee, a lunchtime talk in a workplace, a talk at a community group or club. This model illustrates that there is no one correct way of setting up a Clean Beaches Committee. A group that is formed may not have a specific name, but it will have an action plan to follow which lists the desired action, the steps to doing this, the things they will need, the members of the group, and where and when the first meeting will be held.

Participants will be invited to conduct their own action conversations and engage more people in the initiatives planned. Ultimately it is expected that Connecting Our Coast will result in connections between individuals, between local groups, and between groups in different localities.

## **Expected Outcomes**

### ***Realised opportunities and benefits***

This new program will build community fabric and social cohesion, as well as save money and give positive environmental results. It is a winning situation for all concerned, and feedback indicates that such a move to collaborative projects is long overdue.

The increased need for consultation and information sharing between councils and communities can be met by this model of collaborative groups. When such community structures are in place, communication exchanges and responses are facilitated.

During the stakeholder feedback sessions a wide range of potential projects and plans were suggested, which could be enhanced by this collaborative process. The following list gives some examples:

- Recording oral history
- Developing interpreted walks that incorporate indigenous and botanical perspectives
- Restoring and interpreting coastal heritage and history
- Creating websites
- Facilitating education within SLSC Nippers to include marine and hinterland environments
- Developing a precinct committee system
- Establishing liaison between shorebird monitoring groups and commercial users of the coastal zone
- Developing Active After School programs with primary schools

Marine debris and litter are major issues for the NSW coast, and it is envisaged that partnerships between such groups as Tangaroa Blue, Surfriders Foundation and the various underwater volunteer dive groups will continue and develop. The significant data obtained can lead to action at all levels, and drive significant local plans within this model.



## **Clean Beaches 2011**

The projects implemented will become the submissions for the Clean Beaches 2011 awards. Categories will be determined by the range and nature of the projects and plans being developed. There will be a shift in focus from specific types of projects (eg: resource recovery) towards a focus on the inclusive coastal community. Criteria will be changed to reflect this new approach. This basic shift from infrastructure to community will become self-sustaining.

The Clean Beach Challenge program (2001 – 2009) provided many positive benefits to participants. These benefits will be strengthened and added to. Observations from stakeholders include the following:

- Keep Australia Beautiful NSW is important leverage – maintain this link
- The program has provided promotional spin-offs – increased marketing, increased tourism, media support
- Assessors recommendations are valuable for funding and lobbying
- Awards are a significant hook for participants. There is pride in achievements and recognition

Recommendations and suggestions have also been noted and will be incorporated in the re-structured award system. Some of these include references to assessors' roles, listing of project partners, recognition of long-term commitment and success, restriction on consecutive winners, recognition of individual consistent commitment and the nature of the awards presentation events.

## **Conclusion**

Keep Australia Beautiful NSW is proud to be at the forefront of bringing a much needed collaborative focus to environmental projects within the NSW Coastal Zone. The resulting issues-based community-driven plans and projects will provide a basis for coherent discussion and consensus.

This exciting initiative brings many opportunities for participation. We look forward to increasing our corporate partnerships, and working together to facilitate maximum positive change to the NSW environment. We also look forward to rewarding and acknowledging the valued participation of the many individuals and groups who contribute to this same objective on the ground.

## **References**

Robinson, L. (2010): *How to change the world one conversation at a time.*  
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