Foreword

The NSW Government is committed to delivering a sustainable dredging strategy for NSW to improve the accessibility and environmental health of our waterways. The purpose of this document is to define the approach to dredging as well as funding arrangements over the years 2012/13 to 2014/15.
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NSW Government Sustainable Dredging Strategy
2012/13 – 2013/14

Background
There is a range of benefits that can be achieved by dredging our waterways, including:

- enhanced access for recreational and commercial waterway users,
- safer boating,
- improved environmental flows and tidal flushing and associated environmental benefits,
- resource recovery (that is, beneficial reuse or sale of dredge material), and
- flow-on benefits for tourism and local economies.

The risks and costs of dredging projects have traditionally been borne by State and local government taking into account limited funding and competing priorities.

There is no legislative obligation for Crown Lands to dredge waterways within NSW. Dredging is a discretionary activity designed and undertaken to meet community needs. As such a framework which encourages community contribution is important.

Principles
Coastal waterways are dynamic sedimentary systems. Dredging is often desirable in order to maintain a balance between the needs of the environment, the needs of recreational and commercial boat users and economic imperatives.

The sustainable dredging strategy is based on the following principles:

- Delivering projects that meet short term needs but do not limit long term opportunities
- Determining priorities for investment based on a set of defined assessment criteria that consider benefits, costs and risks.
- Adopting an adaptive approach that also creates economic and social opportunities from investment
- Exploring opportunities for beneficial use of dredged material (including sale of sand to offset costs or to obtain multiple benefits, such as beach nourishment)
- Requiring and/or encouraging contributions by beneficiaries and local communities.
- Integrating dredging proposals with estuary and coastal management planning at an early date to ensure clear understandings are established about community expectations and limiting environmental constraints.
- Preventing environmental degradation.

Prioritisation of Investment
It is expected that the demand for dredging will always exceed the level of funding that is available. This is partly because many potential dredging projects are aspirational in nature and cannot be justified on the basis of public value, environmental impacts or the service levels that are expected. The effects of dredging can be short-lived and frequent campaigns are required to retain the service levels expected by stakeholders.

To ensure the best value from dredging effort, investment will be assessed against a set of criteria to be developed for each type of dredging program. Factors to be considered may vary between programs, and will include: access to existing government maritime infrastructure,
extent and value of boating activity, longevity and practicality of dredging, severity of shoaling, environmental sensitivity and benefits, contribution to regional economies, compatibility with estuary management planning, and demonstrated support from local community.

The ability to leverage funding support from other stakeholders (such as the development industry), the level of co-contribution from local communities and potential to offset costs through sand sales will be considered in assigning priorities.

**Co-contributions to Dredging Projects**

Shared responsibility for funding helps to ensure that proposals are realistic, soundly based and supported in local communities. Contributions by local councils are a demonstration that dredging projects have general community support.

Although there can be broader economic spin-offs, dredging almost invariably provides direct benefits to a limited number of stakeholders (such as recreational and commercial boaters and fishers). As a principle, the cost of dredging projects should be met in part by the beneficiaries on a “user pays” basis.

**Categories of Dredging and Funding Arrangements 2012/13 to 2014/15**

**Rescuing our Waterways Program**

*First Priority (First Phase)*

- Projects in specific waterways previously identified as priorities, as referred to in “Rescuing our Waterways” (including waterway entrances at Lake Cathie, Camden Haven River, Hastings River and Manning River as well as projects at Myall River, Fishermans Bay and Wallis Lake)
- Minimum of $1.5 million allocated over three years.
- Minimum 50% contribution by local government.
- Proposals developed and projects managed by local council.
- Projects to be prioritised based on agreed criteria up to maximum available funding.

*Second Priority (Second Phase)*

- Other dredging of estuaries to provide public benefits with preference for projects where the main purpose is to aid navigation by recreational and commercial vessels.
- Up to $1.5 million allocated over three years.
- Minimum 50% contribution by local stakeholders.
- Project development, management and delivery (including obtaining all approvals) by local council or other suitably qualified entity.
- Projects to be prioritised based on agreed criteria up to maximum available funding.

**Coastal Infrastructure Program**

- Dredging to maintain navigation access to government-owned maritime infrastructure and at “trained” river entrances where breakwaters have been constructed to assist in providing stable navigation conditions.
- $2.250 million has been allocated over three years from 2012/2013.
- Project management by Crown Lands.
- Co-contributions to be sourced from others where possible.

**Dredging to address coastal flooding, coastal hazard management and environmental issues**

- Funding assistance for local government is provided under the Coastal, Estuary and Floodplain Management Programs under the administration of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) – subject to state wide priorities and level of available funding.

*Private sector dredging – extractive industries, aquaculture, access to private infrastructure*

- Nil contribution by State government.
- Project management, approvals and funding by beneficiary.
- Royalties may be payable to NSW Government.

**Implementation Process**

For projects in specific locations referred to in the First Priority under the Rescuing our Waterways Program, Crown Lands will contact the relevant local councils directly to discuss projects, local priorities and funding arrangements.

For other dredging under the Rescuing our Waterways Program (Second Priority) an initial call for project proposals will be made as part of the second phase of the program, including details of assessment criteria and process for prioritisation.

Under the Coastal Infrastructure Program, proposed projects will be assessed by Crown Lands against defined assessment criteria, including feedback from regional stakeholders.