

Joint media release

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Australia-first look at effects of climate change on coastal infrastructure

The impact of climate change on coastal infrastructure will be addressed in a joint, Australia-first initiative between the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) and Northern Beaches Council.

IPWEA and Northern Beaches Council are collaborating to produce *Practice Note 12.1: Climate Change Impacts on Assets*. The final IPWEA-authored practice note will feature case studies from the Council and form part of national industry guidance, to ensure public infrastructure is resilient and adaptable in the face of climate change.

Northern Beaches Council secured an \$80,000 Local Government NSW grant to fund the project.

IPWEA CEO Robert Fuller says the practice note will be an essential tool for local governments, proposing alternative and resilient designs in response to sea level rise and increased extreme weather events for assets like community facilities, wharves, roads and stormwater outlets.

"Coastal communities around the world are preparing for a predicted rise in sea levels. As custodians of their community's assets, local governments need to be informed about the options available to safeguard their roads, stormwater outlets and surf clubs for an uncertain future. This practice note will fill the need for evidence-based guidance that decision-makers can use to protect their community's vital assets," Mr Fuller says.

Experts are predicting an increase in the impact of climate change on coastal communities, including rising sea levels, heat and more extreme weather events like the April 2015 and June 2016 storms.

Council Administrator Dick Persson says the LG NSW funding will help produce options for making infrastructure last longer, with two pilot projects to be tested.

"We want to ensure that when we spend ratepayers' money on public infrastructure we are doing it in a responsible and sustainable way by ensuring it's built to withstand the test of time," he says.

Mr Persson explains that – as a peninsula that is three-quarters surrounded by water and dominated by bushland – Northern Beaches Council is almost unique in Australia.

"That has very obvious impacts on our environment," he explains. "In Manly and its surrounding suburbs alone, the risk exposure just to roads would impact more than 500 sections of roads, and storms would produce four times as many annual road closures."

It is also important that stormwater infrastructure on the Northern Beaches is resilient to climate change impacts such as increased extreme rainfall events and sea level rise. The Northern Beaches has 21 surf lifesaving clubs, the most of any local government area in Australia. With many of those club buildings ageing, it is important that any renovations or rebuilds are done sustainably so they are resilient to sea level rise and storm events.

“We are proud to have been chosen to receive this grant to help Northern Beaches Council lead the development of national industry guidance in infrastructure climate adaptation,” Mr Persson says.

The practice note is due for release around mid-2018.

About IPWEA

IPWEA is the peak not-for-profit association for public works and engineering professionals across Australia and New Zealand. It provides training, publications and advocacy to support its 4000-plus members and 20,000 community of engineering professionals who provide essential community infrastructure. Visit www.ipwea.org.

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