



## South West and Peel Coastal Management

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### *Case Study 1: Working together to care for the coast*

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#### Introduction

This Case Study will look at some of the models for Australian coastal partnership programs and explore the benefits and challenges of fostering a true partnership approach to managing our coastal and near shore marine environments in Australia.

The coastal and near shore marine areas of Australia have a range of coastal managers, users, interest groups and coastal program managers working together over time and space. The unique partnerships between the many stakeholders involved in Coastal Zone Management can range from being between those living in coastal communities and grass roots coastal volunteer groups through to National and International Programs.

There are many examples of programs fostering a partnership approach and the identified benefits to support existing coastal networks focused around our coastal and marine areas in the Peel and South West of Australia.

As the pressures increase along our coast from coastal development and coastal change, the coast becomes even more valuable and working together for shared outcomes becomes increasingly important (Coast Adapt - <https://coastadapt.com.au>).

This Case Study will explore a short history of the government and non government coastal partnership programs and how when government support over-arching partnership approaches, it has supported successful local and regional (landscape scale) partnership programs, covering cross land tenure and cross sector projects. This Case Study also explores some examples of where local and regional partnerships are driven and funded by the community, NGO's and/or private sector.

#### Background

Since 1994, Coast SWaP has fostered a partnership approach to work together for best practice coastal zone management in the Peel and South West of Australia. Coast SWaP has provided a mechanism for stewardship, regional facilitation, research, community capacity building, sharing of resources and information and a collective voice for encouraging and undertaking true Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

The Coast SWaP Network consists of over 40 Members including - Coastal Community Groups, coastal volunteers, representatives of the general community, Local Governments, State and Federal Government, NRM / Landcare, Commercial Sector, Nyoongar Community representatives and Traditional Owners.

There are a range of examples of local and regional government and non government lead partnerships to care for the coast within the Coast Swap Region (Walpole to Mandurah). Nature Conservation Margaret River Branch is a leading example of a non government organisation working in collective effort along a section of coast and across various partnership coastal focused conservation groups. Since 2002 Nature Conservation has developed effective and sustainable solutions to key environmental challenges facing the Margaret River region, in the south-west of Australia. Formerly known as the Cape to Cape Catchments Group, the organisation leverages the strength of the regional community by raising awareness, inspiring commitment and empowering action on behalf of the environment. It does this by combining grassroots community support with sound conservation science and pragmatic policy initiatives (<https://www.natureconservation.org.au>).

The Peron Naturaliste partnership is a leading example of a local government lead coastal partnership aiming to address climate change risks in the coastal zone from Rockingham to Busselton ([www.peronnaturaliste.org.au](http://www.peronnaturaliste.org.au)).

Many of the most complex aspects of integration involves the development of relationships and trust between agency and community. Coast SWaP has and will continue to support stakeholders to share information, strengthen relationships and address priority coastal management issues between Mandurah and Walpole in the South West region of Western Australia.

There are many ways in which local and regional partnerships are driving integrated coastal zone management within, across and beyond the Coast SWaP region. Coast SWaP will continue to support local volunteers and programs managers through our current Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

In 1998, Coastcare, one of Australia's coastal programs under the National Heritage Trust, had a principle objective of engaging local community in managing the coast. The development of relationships and trust between agency and community were beginning to emerge nationally, through Coastcare.

The Commonwealth introduced Coastcare under the Natural Heritage Trust and the WA State Government Coastwest/Coastcare partnership continued under the Coast and Clean Seas MOU (a tripartite agreement between local, State and Commonwealth Governments). The Commonwealth Government's insisted the delivery of Coastcare became uniform across all states. This resulted for WA was to see Coastwest objectives and priorities being aligned with the new national Coastcare program in the spirit of a unified national program.

In 2003, after eight years of a successful partnership between Commonwealth, State and local governments, the Coastwest/Coastcare program takes a new direction as the Commonwealth Government will dissolve the current Coastcare and amalgamate the program into the broader Natural Resource Management framework within the Natural Heritage Trust. However, the Western Australian Government and the Western Australian Local Government Association acknowledge the community's need for a dedicated coastal and marine program and aim to continue the excellent work of Coastwest.

([https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop\\_pub\\_pdf/wacoastlines.pdf](https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop_pub_pdf/wacoastlines.pdf) Coastlines 2003).

In 2008, the federal funding for coastal and near shore marine then redirected through the national Caring for Country Program, providing funding and coastcare community grants through bioregions. In the SW of WA our regional NRM bodies / Catchment Authorities received funding for identified coastal hotspots, coastal facilitators and program managers and on-ground coastal community partnership projects. For Example the Coastal Facilitator program in South West Catchment Council supported partnership programs, engaging with 19 community groups and 8 land managers in 2017 contributing to over 2700 hours work worth around \$52,000 (SWCC Coastal Facilitators Report at 2017 Coast SWaP Forum). Currently, the Federal Government is providing competitive grants programs through the National Landcare Programme (NLP 1 and 2) with no clear specific targets for coastal areas and various previous Coastal and Marine Programs funded through previous Federal Programs no longer being funded, or heavily reduced.

There are various non-government partnership programs and networks driving the national agenda for the coast, various NGO's aim to provide a national and international framework and support and encourage citizen science and local stewardship of the coast. These non-government groups and programs are very important for driving and guaranteeing ongoing efforts in managing and protecting aspects of our coastal and marine environments. There are many successful models and examples – The Nature Conservancy, Pew International, Birdlife Australia, Tangaroa Blue, Australian Marine Science Association and Australian Coastal Society whom have released 10 over arching Principles for Australian Coastal and Marine Management.



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Figure 1: Tangaroa Blue works in partnership with hundreds of local community groups to run beach clean ups across WA and Australia in 2017.

In 2017 the Coast SWaP released our new strategic plan, soon after, the first WA Coastal Strategy (<https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/10223.aspx>) was also released at the first joint WA State NRM and Coastal Conference in August 2017. The WA Coastal Strategy presents an opportunity for collaboration, strengthening effective partnerships and encouraging regional facilitation across land tenure, and hopefully to grass roots coastal focused organisations.

Coastwest continues to provide annual state funding for coastal community groups and local government programs and provides a statewide program coordinator in 2018 whom supports key local partners in providing funding. The WA Government also has a Coastal Management Planning Assistance Program for supporting involving Communities in addressing Climate Change Risk in the Coastal Zone (under the state government's new State Planning Policy 2.6 for managing current and future risk of erosion and marine inundation to 2110).

### Managing Country Together

First Australians have lived on the land for millennia, developing a strong commitment to look after it, as well as accumulating generations of traditional knowledge about the ecology (<https://www.bushheritage.org.au/what-we-do/aboriginal-partnerships>). There are many examples of indigenous led initiatives and organisations that we can learn from, both based within and outside the Peel and South West. As we learn from both traditional ecological knowledge and science, it is apparent that we can benefit from working together under a 'Managing Country Together' Model on public land along the coast.

Regional Indigenous Led Initiatives and tools that can be used for coastal and marine management include:

- Indigenous Rangers Program
- Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Program, which was established in 1997
- Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA's)
- Native Title – Joint management agreements between state and Native Title Holders
- Land and Sea Country Plans
- Marine Protected Area - Multi Purpose areas

There are lessons we can learn from indigenous led models, including these critical components for success:

- Emphasis on Indigenous-led organisations and initiatives
- A local or 'place-based' focus
- Partnerships across different sectors and cross land tenure
- Programs which utilise the unique skills of our partners



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## Research Partnerships

Research partnerships are increasingly important for basing decisions on good science, understanding systems and change in systems, technical, scientific advice, learning from previous experience, cost effective partnership.

The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility - Coast Adapt Programme , a National research partnership of researchers, private and the public sector forged a national coastal adaptation community. Collaboration can achieve many beneficial outcomes for adaptation in areas such as stakeholder participation and buy-in, financing and information availability. Lack of collaboration may result in maladaptation as the scales of the response will not match the scales of the risk (<https://coastadapt.com.au/how-to-pages/collaboration-and-partnerships-climate-change-adaptation>).

CoastAdapt's Coastal Climate Adaptation Decision Support framework (C-CADS) outlines approaches to developing and implementing an adaptation plan or project. It identifies several areas where partnerships and collaboration can play a strong role (see [Using C-CADS](#)).

## Industry and Corporate Partnerships

Initiatives that foster strong industry partnerships help to build the capacity of regional bodies and community and coast care groups to undertake a range of volunteer coastline works. The program provides the groups with coordinated and well managed teams of trained volunteers.

For example Woodside Coastal Guardians is a unique program that initiates strong industry partnerships to help build the capacity and support coastal community groups to undertake a range of volunteer coastline works. The program provides the groups with coordinated and well managed teams of trained volunteers.

Coastal Guardians have helped boost the capacity of 38 coastal land care managers to contribute more than 900 days of various volunteer works. More than 44,500 volunteer hours have been dedicated to conservation activities including removal of 320,000m<sup>2</sup> of weeds and 12,000 kilograms of marine debris, planting of 67,000 stems and construction of more than four kilometres of fence line to protect dune systems ([https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop\\_pub\\_pdf/WA\\_Coastal\\_Awards\\_2017.pdf](https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop_pub_pdf/WA_Coastal_Awards_2017.pdf)).

## Identified benefits and opportunities of partnership approach

The benefits and opportunities of coastal focused partnerships, as identified through this case study include;

- pooling of resources, collective effort
- partnership fosters communication between local groups and decision makers
- economy of scale – supporting existing local effort for increase local action / outcomes,
- cost effective to foster community stewardship for coast care and action
- consistency of effort and support across land tenure
- streamlined effort over time / temporal scales.
- supporting local coastal care and action groups
- community capacity building
- community stewardship / citizen science
- cross sector engagement
- environmental outcomes / local community health benefits
- sharing stories and lessons
- sharing lessons
- scientific research
- encourage corporate responsibilities

## Lessons learned

This is a snap shot at a short history and current coastal focused partnership programs in our region has exposed many challenges and opportunities for supporting and developing coastal partnerships. Some take home lessons:

- national lead program can help



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- non government (NGO and corporate/ industry) partnerships can help support increase effort and increase awareness
- The WA Coastal Strategy presents an opportunity for collaboration, strengthening effective partnerships.
- regional partnerships like Coast SWaP have proven of benefit when looking at the ongoing support provided to local coastal action groups and the potential benefit of achieving ICZM to all tiers of government.
- true partnership and collaboration can be achieved between government, interest groups, community, industry, research community when supporting citizen scientists and other types of volunteerism on the coast.
- There is great value in supporting and being involved in regional, state, national and international NGO programs, filling the gaps and seeking opportunities in bringing a resources and funding into local and regional partnership initiatives.
- Managing coast is complex and considered a 'wicked problem'
- finding multiple objectives, common goals for shared vision can be difficult
- competing interest/ conflict negotiation important
- politics and change of government can deeply impact partnership programs
- cross land tenure projects/ cross sector projects can have multiple mutual benefits
- lack of legislation to support principles
- lack of support for regional facilitation for grass roots organisations, regional NRM, Local council and regional volunteer groups with limited capacity trying to fill the gap.
- the coast is linear – challenging to share info, travel costs associated for volunteers,
- insurances, acquiring and managing funding
- there is a legacy of existing networks and partnerships focused on the coast in the Peel and SW of Australia.

### Conclusion – working together for a consistent approach

Striving to work together for an integrated approach to managing the coastal is challenging. If we can work within a set of Principles for Coastal and Marine Management in Australia

(<https://australiancoastalsociety.org/latest-news/2018/may/08/ten-guiding-principles-for-marine-and-coastal-management/>) and find ways to connect through creating unique and innovative partnerships, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is achievable.

The greatest challenges revolve around the complex and ambitious nature of the notion of ICZM itself, involving everyone, all the time. It is possible to achieve shared positive outcomes for the coast by working together but it also must be noted that involving everyone on everything coastal related is just not feasible all the time.

By encouraging and fostering a partnership approach we can have consistent facilitation across land tenure and over time. There are many successful ambitious partnership programs related to the coast that can benefit everyone from grass roots groups, beach users / visitors and coastal managers.

It is evident that funding and resources available for collaborative effort in Australia's many Coastal and Marine Programs have varied in between NRM regions and from state to state since the departure of the dedicated national Coastcare Program and again under the latest federal funding model.

Coastcare played a key role in contributing to an integrated and participatory approach to coastal management in Australia. Coastcare represented an internationally unique example of an operational Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) initiative (Clarke 2001). Coastcare's greatest strengths lies in its active capacity building, various pathways of communication and cooperation between Program stakeholders (Commonwealth, state and local government, corporate, youth, the program team and community) that have developed through Coastcare partnerships (Clarke 2003).

In the absence of national leadership in this space, regional groups with a focus on partnerships, like Coast SWaP, can help fill the gaps and provide meaningful support to smaller community group, share lessons and facilitate regional advocacy and a united voice for partners and members.