

Rec'd	- 4 AUG 2014
Reg. No.	14 SEC
File No.	
k.	
on Officers	1 LH
onse due	



Government of South Australia
Coast Protection Board

Date: 30 July 2014

Hon Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation
GPO Box 1047
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Level 1 ANR House
1 Richmond Road
Keswick SA 5035
GPO Box 1047
Adelaide SA 5001
Australia
DX138
Ph: +61 8 8124 4928
Fax: +61 8 8124 4920
www.environment.sa.gov.au

Dear Minister Hunter

Abolition of Boards and Committees

I am writing to you on behalf of the Coast Protection Board (the Board) regarding the Premier's reform of the Government's boards and committees. I have been invited to consider the Board's functions, whether the Board is required in order for them to be undertaken and whether alternative business models could improve efficiency and independence.

The Board considered this request at its 25 July 2014 meeting, and resolved to provide you with the following advice:

- The Coast Protection Board, enabled under the *Coast Protection Act 1972*, is a board with a strategic focus on the challenges of managing South Australia's coast. The Board is very much aware of the fact that under its legislation it operates under the direction of the Minister and that the act, under an intergovernmental relations agreement between state and local government, established the Board as a partnership between these two spheres of government. The Board is also aware of broad community and political support for this role.
- The Board's role, and particularly its operational aspect, is delivered with close partnerships between the Board and local government. It effectively brings together the two levels of government that have responsibility for protecting people and assets from the advances of the sea through both sound planning policy and delivering physical protection infrastructure.
- The relative independence of the Board allows it to manage the myriad of sensitive issues that arise on the coast across a wide range of stakeholders that have diverse, and at times, competing interests. Sea level rise is one of the most significant of these issues. The impacts of sea level rise are escalating and it is important that there is a well-resourced, collaborative body at the state level to assist in meeting these challenges for the long-term future.

Contact:	Murray Townsend, Manager Coast & River Murray Unit
Phone:	[REDACTED] Murray.townsend@sa.gov.au
Date:	31 July 2014

- The Board achieves the above through its unique (amongst government bodies) composition, with a mix of members with relevant expertise (including local government) and agency representatives, with sound links to the Local Government Association and 34 metropolitan and regional coastal councils through its small advisory committee. The Board is also aware that communities not represented by a coastal council can also have a strong interest in the coast (e.g. recreation, property, environment and access to beaches and the sea).
- The cross-agency and expert nature of the Board provides for objective decision making with what I believe is a useful and appropriate level of independence from government. With these resources it has developed comprehensive, publicly available policies and undertakes on-the-ground interactions with coastal communities. The Board aims to operate in an open way and seeks out stakeholders for discussion where appropriate at both support staff and Board levels. This is of particular importance in relation to its decisions on the funding and approval of coastal protection works, and in its responses to development applications.
- The active role of the Board on the coast is demonstrated by the significant coastal land holdings that it has acquired over the years in critical locations for the benefit of the community and for environmental purposes. The Board is also currently engaged in legal action to ensure the restoration of illegally cleared sand dunes near Ceduna.
- More than 70% of its annual funding is provided directly to councils through grants for on-ground works or investigations. The Board has been successful in using its funds to leverage significant sums of external funding, mostly from the Australian Government, to enable more works to be funded than could be undertaken between the Board and councils alone.
- To ensure the efficiency of its operations the Board has granted and oversees considerable delegations to senior departmental officers. It also actively contributes to red-tape reduction by applying its powers under the *Development Act 1993* to approve beach replenishment activities by councils or others without requiring development approval. Regarding other coastal development, the Board supports the 'one-stop-shop' concept whereby assessment occurs under the Development Act, with referral to the Board where necessary, without approval being required under the Coast Protection Act. It has also ensured that certain development does not need referral to it by having the appropriate assessment provisions established in coastal Development Plans.
- In a sense I believe the Board is a model of what the Premier is looking for in that it is a collaborative and innovative way of integrating the right knowledge, skills and

interests, while delegating against a comprehensive policy framework to enable responsive and efficient advice and resource provision to the highest priority needs.

- Furthermore, the Board provides these services economically. The cost of supporting the Board's six (6) members and three (3) advisory committee members is less than \$15,000 per year, which is mainly the cost of visits to coastal communities. The majority of its members and advisors contribute high level expertise and local connections that aren't otherwise available within government. The manner in which the Board has been able to absorb very considerable savings in recent times, while continuing to provide support and deliver outcomes, demonstrates the efficiency of the model.
- The across-agency representation on the Board provides invaluable and unique contributions from, and connections with, the agencies represented (the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure and Tourism SA). For example, these representatives have been key contributors to the Board's long-term engagement with Kangaroo Island's community to help it benefit from its unique coast. More recently the Board has benefited from their input in evolving its policies to embrace the focus of the Kangaroo Island Futures Authority.
- Sitting fees are paid to only three (3) members of the Board, and it and its advisory committee include a number of state and local government employees who participate as part of their jobs. The fees that are paid do not fully compensate members for their time and the extent of their responsibilities they undertake. Their work can effectively be regarded as community service. This is evident in the passion and care they all bring to the Board's work.
- The Board has not been able to determine a model where its functions could be efficiently achieved on a regional basis or in a 'consolidated' central office. Experience has demonstrated that integrating coastal management, especially with limited resources, needs both close cooperation with local government representation (individually, on a regional basis and as a tier of government) while having access to integrated professional support in engineering, planning and science.
- The simultaneously diverse and specialist knowledge provided by the Board is uncommon, and unlikely to be able to be replicated in a regionalised model. Similarly, there are not sufficient specialists, with the skills and experience of the DEWNR staff that support the Board, to be dispersed across a regional model of delivery, whether that is within state or local government.
- Another alternative would be to replace the Board with a public servant, for example a Coast Protection Commissioner. This option would be substantially more expensive,

would present credibility difficulties in terms of the various skills needed such as engineering, planning and science, and would make engagement with local government and stakeholders more difficult.

- The Coast Protection Board's business is unique, specialised and increasingly critical to meet the challenge of adapting to sea level rise as a consequence of climate change. Key aspects of adaptation include mitigating costs and social impacts for communities, governments and business now and in the future. The Board provides impartial, balanced, expert oversight of the options and mechanisms needed to address this issue in the coming decades.
- Therefore, beyond the current collaborations with other agencies, including those in local government, natural resource management, emergency services and native vegetation, the Board does not see an advantage in merging with any other Board. Coastal issues require a targeted effort and have not been a specific interest of other boards and committees. There is no duplication between the Board's activities and those of NRM Boards: there is a complementary separation of roles, with the NRM sphere having a different focus than that required of the Board.
- The Board's work inevitably has it adjudicating between private benefits and longer-term community safety and cost avoidance. While the Board is subject to Ministerial direction and control, its composition means that it is perceived as being more independent than, for example, a public servant. This, together with its collaborative way of operating, helps the Board maintain its credibility as an even-handed adjudicator.
- Similarly, reducing the Board's role to that of being only an advisor to the Government would not provide the benefits to local government and the community that are currently delivered by the Board. These include delivery of its works programme, its leveraging of external funds for works and investigations and its strategic and operational planning functions. It would also impair the provision of relevant professional advice to councils which they are unable to afford the in-house.
- The South Australian model of coastal management, with the Board facilitating a partnership between state and local government, is considered nationally to be an exemplary model. The benefits of this model have been recognised and praised in both the private and public sectors and across the breadth of professions engaged in coastal management.
- In summary, the Coast Protection Board model is the most cost-effective way that the act's long and shorter-term objectives can be met. Its method of operations is based on openness, engagement and collaboration. The Board, through its obvious independence, is able to maintain credibility as an even-handed leader in coastal

management. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Coast Protection Board be exempt from abolition.

- However, following your consideration of the above advice, the Board and its advisory committee would welcome a discussion on other models you may want to examine and we would be happy to provide further advice.

For further information on this matter please contact me on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Graham Foreman
Presiding Member
Coast Protection Board

