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Key governance issues for coastal management in Australia (Lessons for QLD)

The cumulative impacts of our actions have had significant and lasting effects on the world around us. We live at a time when there is strong evidence to suggest our natural systems have been heavily loaded and ecosystem carrying capacity is under significant threat. There is international consensus on climate change, although still a degree of uncertainty about what some of these impacts might be. If coastal populations continue to increase rapidly as demographic evidence suggests, serious attention needs to be given to coastal planning, policy development and systems of management.

This presentation reviews the range of issues covered in thirteen papers, recently published in a report that focuses on key institutional and governance issues for coastal natural resource management in Australia. The various papers focus on what we know about pressure on existing institutions; what we can learn from existing institutions; and what the outstanding challenges are for coastal planning in Australia. In compiling this report the authors also sought to question whether a comprehensive review of coastal management arrangements in Australia was required, and if so, to provide a starting point for such a review.

The overwhelming argument across the essays is that the current institutional arrangements, governance and learning systems simply are not able to deal with the complexities of coastal management. Three significant issues come out strongly across all of the papers and authors argue that we urgently need to:

- Improve strategic planning across levels of government and between agencies;
- Invest in human capital such as education and professional capacity; and
- There needs to be a clear articulation of responsibilities.

The commencement of the review of the State Coastal Plan this year, presents a unique opportunity for the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency to work with the community, industry, academia and mostly importantly other agencies and levels of government to improve the State Policy for all Queenslanders.