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Dear Professor Harvey

Thank you for your correspondence to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP concerning the Australian Coastal Society's priorities for national coastal adaptation action. Minister Bowen has asked me to thank you for your correspondence and to reply on his behalf.

We appreciate the Australian Coastal Society's advocacy for integrated coastal zone management, and awareness that climate change risks to coastal communities and settlements are a matter of national priority and that there is a need for further adaptation action.

National leadership and collaboration

The roles and responsibilities for adaptation were agreed to in 2012 by the then Council of Australian Governments' Select Council on Climate Change. These roles are underpinned by the principle that 'risks are most effectively managed by recognising and empowering those who are best placed to manage them'. The Australian Government's role includes providing national leadership on adaptation and nationally authoritative climate science and information. The release of the National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan contributes to fulfilling this role.

The Government will now work with states, territories and local government to create an action agenda for the National Adaptation Plan by the end of 2026, working through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council, to give effect to priority actions identified for government at all levels of Australian society. This will include further mainstreaming adaptation efforts, exercising leadership to catalyse action through improved data, governance and coordination, and prioritising new measures to address gaps.

There are significant steps already underway to respond to our future climate. For example, the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) is a long-term commitment by the Government, with \$149 million committed over 6 years to 2026-27. Research in 4 priority areas, including climate adaptation, is funded across all NESP hubs. In particular, the Climate Systems Hub conducts research to advance the understanding of Australia's climate and inform climate adaptation solutions for Australia and the Marine and Coastal Hub's research is informing management of Australia's marine and coastal environments.

The Government is also working to improve climate literacy, education and information availability. In 2024, the Department, Geoscience Australia and Engineers Australia updated the Australian Rainfall and Runoff guidelines to better incorporate climate change considerations. In late 2025, the Department released draft climate change scenario guidance for public

consultation. Together, these documents will help users understand and consider how future changes in climate may affect them.

Furthermore, the Government's Disaster Ready Fund is supporting the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia's Climate Resilient Infrastructure project, which will deliver resources that provide asset managers and engineers with the relevant knowledge, training and tools needed to reduce climate change risks to infrastructure, including coastal assets.

With regards to coastal adaptation, the interjurisdictional Coastal Hazards Working Group (CHWG), with Commonwealth, state and territory, and local government representation, is developing a National Coastal Hazards Management Framework. The framework will improve understanding of how levels of government are working together and develop principles to guide investment in Australia's resilience to coastal hazards. The CHWG and the National Partnership for Climate Projections are also engaging with Engineers Australia to develop a consistent, collaborative and integrated approach to update the National Committee on Coastal and Ocean Engineering's 2017 editions of coastal guidelines on climate change and sustainability.

Estuaries and knowledge gaps

To date, the Australian Climate Service has prioritised modelling non-estuarine coastal environments. Progress in investigating estuaries is limited to case studies. Ongoing work includes developing a comprehensive estuary water-level dataset to quantify flooding risks and validate hindcast and projection systems. The next phase should focus on implementing estuary-tailored risk assessment methods aligned with significant decision-making contexts to support evidence-based policy.

Blue carbon

The Government recognises the importance of blue carbon ecosystems for climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection of biodiversity and threatened species, disaster risk reduction and livelihoods of coastal communities. It is supporting research, on-ground restoration projects, capacity building and global partnerships, such as the recent \$30.5 million Blue Carbon Conservation, Restoration and Accounting Program. This program implemented blue carbon restoration and conservation activities in Australia and overseas, applied project-level environmental economic accounting to demonstrate how restoration and conservation activities lead to climate, biodiversity and livelihood outcomes, and enhanced collaborations and knowledge exchange in Australia and across the region.

While there is much adaptation action already underway across all levels of government, communities, and the private and not-for-profit sectors, there remains more to do. The Government is delivering on its obligations and working hard to accelerate climate adaptation.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns and ideas to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely



Nicole Thomas
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