

**ITEM 3: LMM 25/02/2020 - STOCKTON BEACH EROSION NATURAL DISASTER  
UPDATE**

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**MOTION**

**That City of Newcastle:**

1. Notes that following the severe and ongoing coastal erosion at Stockton Beach, the NSW Government granted City of Newcastle's request to declare a Natural Disaster at Stockton Beach;
2. Notes that this declaration means that City of Newcastle is eligible for assistance through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Fund Arrangements to help with the cost of cleaning up and restoring damaged essential public assets, but does not allow for action towards a long term solution to address erosion at Stockton Beach;
3. Commends the Stockton and broader community for their community rally, where thousands of people gathered in frustration at the current inability to address coastal erosion over the long term;
4. Acknowledges ongoing community concern about the closure of Lexie's on the Beach café and the forced relocation of Stockton Beach Holiday Park cabins;
5. Reassures the community that both measures have only been undertaken as an emergency response, based on expert engineering advice;
6. Commits to working with the owners of Lexie's on the Beach towards a resolution which protects local jobs by exploring all available options to allow the café to trade, while not compromising community safety;
7. Commits to the ongoing operation of the Stockton Holiday Park cabins, to protect the local economy and local jobs;
8. Ensures that the Stockton Community is updated with the latest information about:
  - a. Our response to the Natural Disaster declaration at Stockton Beach;
  - b. Public Safety provisions at Stockton Beach
  - c. The ongoing development of our Coastal Management Program (CMP); including recent direction from the Minister for Local Government to complete this process by 30 June 2020;
  - d. Outstanding grant applications that City of Newcastle has made to the NSW Government;
  - e. What we are doing to support Lexie's on the Beach café;
  - f. The situation regarding the forced relocation of Stockton Holiday Park cabins;
9. Reiterates the need for the NSW Government to consider legislative or regulatory change to allow for emergency offshore marine dredging for sand nourishment at Stockton Beach.

**BACKGROUND:**



**Emergency response to severe erosion**

Public safety has been our highest priority as we continue to deal with the severe ongoing erosion at Stockton Beach, which led to Newcastle being included in a Natural Disaster declaration following recent wild weather.

Managing the impacts of the erosion is a complex process and we appreciate the genuine concern of the community.

**Lexie's on the Beach cafe**

- The building leased by Lexie's on the Beach was assessed by coastal engineers with the report stating the building is within a hazardous zone of wave impact and is at immediate risk of significant damage or failure in a one-in-two-year storm event.
- The City of Newcastle and Lexie's Cafe are working on a plan to reopen.

- The process to reopen the café will first require securing insurance for the building leased to Lexie's Café. Prior to this necessary step, Lexie's Café has committed to the development of a Management Plan.
- The City and Lexie's have also discussed establishing a temporary café in Stockton, beside the Stockton Ferry Terminal, while the necessary work is done to get Lexie's reopened at its traditional Mitchell Street home.

### **Holiday Park cabins**

- There is no available space for all the relocated cabins within the existing holiday park as this space is designated for tents and caravans.
- The park is open and continues to take bookings.
- The cabins were compromised by the severe erosion and were relocated to save them from falling into the ocean.
- On-ground works are being done to secure the cabins and safeguard them against high winds. This means footings and ties have been installed.
- Underground works to the area east of Stockton Swimming Pool have been undertaken to minimise future costs associated with the security of the cabins, should a development application for the permanent relocation of the cabins in this area be approved.
- A Development Application will be submitted to secure this location in the short to medium term.

### **Beach access**

All beach access points between King Street and Corroba Oval have been closed. Little Beach off King Street remains open for public use.

### **Fact Sheet**

We've developed a fact sheet that can be downloaded from our website to help inform the public of the current situation.



Large easterly swells, particularly high tides and heavy rainfall since the beginning of February have exacerbated erosion issues at Stockton Beach. A Natural Disaster covering the Newcastle local government area has been declared.

Emergency management procedures have been put in place to protect public safety and public assets across the Stockton foreshore.

## **EMERGENCY ACTION**

### **Natural Disaster Declaration**

The severity of the weather event impacts from February 2020 led to the inclusion of Newcastle in the February Storms and Floods Natural Disaster Declaration.

The declaration means the City is eligible for assistance through the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Eligible businesses may also be able to access assistance under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

For information on Natural Disaster declaration visit [www.emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au)

### **Public Safety**

All access to Stockton Beach from King Street to Corroba Oval has been closed until further notice.

The public is strongly advised to stay off the beach and observe all closures, warning signs and directions of staff and other authorities.

The public is also advised to keep away from the top and bottom of sand cliffs as they may be unstable and collapse without warning.

Heavy vehicles and plant equipment are operating around emergency works. Parking areas and roads will be closed without notice to meet operational requirements.

### **Stockton Holiday Park**

Stockton Holiday Park is open and is continuing to take bookings.

The ocean fronting cabins, previously protected by about 10 metres of dune vegetation, were assessed as being at imminent risk from the swells and were relocated to the adjacent reserve behind Stockton Swimming Centre.

This is a temporary measure and a development application will be submitted to secure this location in the short to medium term while a long-term solution to the erosion is implemented and the risk to assets mitigated.

No available space is available for all the relocated cabins within the existing holiday park as this space is designated for tents and caravans, and the park continues to take bookings.

While the cabins have been temporarily located, they must be properly secured to safeguard them against high winds which means footings and ties have to be installed.

Underground works to the area east of Stockton Swimming Pool have been undertaken to minimise future costs associated with the security of the cabins, should a development application for the permanent relocation of the cabins in this area be approved.

The area for the relocated cabins was identified as a potential site for future use of the Holiday Park in the 2012 South Stockton Public Domain Plan.

### **Lexie's café**

The City has been forced to maintain the closure of the building at Stockton Beach currently leased to Lexie's Café following advice from coastal engineers.

The independent coastal engineer report following further severe erosion in recent weeks states that the building is within a hazardous zone of wave impact and is at immediate risk of significant damage or failure in a one-in-two-year storm event.

Following a meeting on 25 February 2020, the City and Lexie's Café are working on a plan to reopen café.

The process to reopen the café will first require securing insurance for the building leased to Lexie's Cafe. Prior to this necessary step, Lexie's Café has committed to the development of a Management Plan.

The City of Newcastle and Lexie's have also discussed establishing a temporary café in Stockton, beside the Stockton Ferry Terminal, while the necessary work is done to get Lexie's reopened at its traditional Mitchell Street home.

### **Stockton SLSC amenities block, carpark area**

Emergency sandbag protection works were installed from Monday 10 February 2020 in the area south of the SLSC seawall. Further emergency works using one and four tonne sandbags along an approximate 30 metre frontage were undertaken in front of the Holiday Park on Thursday 13 February 2020.

The area north of the SLSC seawall wall at Dalby Oval has been severely eroded and has an unstable sand cliff. Repairs using one and four tonne sandbags along an approximate 20 metre frontage, were made to the northern end of the SLSC seawall. This included stormwater pipe and outlet repairs. The area has been fenced for public safety and further work at this work site is being undertaken.

### **Mitchell Street Seawall**

Repairs using one and four tonne sandbags along a 50 metre frontage were made to the southern end of the Mitchell Street seawall.

An inspection has identified extension and repair of sandbags at the southern end of Mitchell Street seawall, at Pembroke Street is required.

All accessways along the Mitchell Street seawall are closed until further notice. Two carparking bays at Mitchell Street near Pembroke Street have been barricaded off.

Erosion has exposed significant amounts of historic material and debris which poses public safety risks. The public is advised to avoid the beach and debris. Arrangements are being made to clean up exposed debris as conditions allow.

### **Emergency Sandbag Works (Griffith Street and Stone Street)**

The one tonne sandbag protection works have been installed as a temporary protection measure for the roadways and the northern end of the Mitchell Street seawall.

Reinforcing of the sandbag wall at Griffith Street of an approximate 12 metre frontage, was undertaken on Friday and Saturday 7 and 8 February 2020 and coastal consultants have been on site to consider erosion repair needs.

Replacement of displaced bags at Griffiths and Stone Streets will be undertaken.

### **ON-GOING MONITORING AND EMERGENCY ACTIONS**

City of Newcastle will continue to monitor ocean conditions with predictions for future large swells and high tides potentially causing additional erosion.

Precautionary action to be taken ahead of severe conditions may include:

- Additional road closures and traffic management
- Additional exclusion areas or extensions of current work zones
- Emergency repairs and reinforcing of existing seawalls and sandbag banks

The public is advised to keep away from the top and bottom of sand cliffs as they may be unstable and collapse without warning, not to access any part of Stockton Beach south of Griffith Avenue and to avoid debris and potentially hazardous material.

Emergency works may be undertaken without notice with an increase in truck movements and operating plant equipment.

The public is asked to observe all traffic and pedestrian detours to ensure the safety of the public and staff.

### **STOCKTON EROSION MANAGEMENT**

- Sandbag protection works are temporary protection measures for the protection of public and private assets.
- The severity of the erosion in February 2020 significantly altered the risk profile for the Stockton Holiday Park and Lexie's café building from December 2019.
- Emergency actions are consistent with the approved Newcastle Coastal Zone Management Plan 2018 which prescribes the relevant conditions to undertake emergency works.
- The City of Newcastle's sand nourishment project at the southern end of Stockton Beach included the placement of 5,500 tonne of sand over a ten-day period and was completed on

12 December 2019. The project included pre and post sand placement transport monitoring and preliminary results have shown movement of the placed sand into the nearshore zone forming a sand bank a few weeks after placement. This sand movement has created a shallow beach frontage and appears to have reduced the impact of this erosion event.

- Existing NSW legislation and regulations do not permit offshore sand extraction for beach nourishment.
- Long-term solutions to coastal erosion, including such options as large scale sand nourishment, require endorsement by the NSW Government through the mandated Coastal Management Program process.

### **Coastal Management Program (CMP) Update**

City of Newcastle is on track to have the process finished twelve months ahead of schedule.

More than 12 months ago the NSW Government rejected our request that Stockton be fast tracked by having its own management plan. As recently as late last year the Government's bureaucrats were still expanding the CMP through the inclusion of Throsby Creek.

Last week Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock MP, wrote to the City stating that a CMP for Stockton must now be completed by 30 June 2020.

This deadline can only be met if multiple steps in the Government's legislated process are waived. What is critical and what we have asked for is which steps in their process we can skip without giving the Government justification to reject the submitted CMP.

To date we have not received an answer to this question.

We have also asked the NSW Government to approve the multiple grant applications we have submitted, some of which were done four months ago and are critical in terms of allowing emergency works. It is only with genuine support from the NSW Government that City of Newcastle stands any chance of delivering a CMP for Stockton by 30 June which they will certify.

The actual deadline for Council is much sooner than 30 June given the draft CMP must be placed on public exhibition for 28 days. This is so that the community can provide feedback on a long term solution for the coastal erosion caused by the Stockton Breakwall, which of course is 100% owned by the NSW Government.

The City of Newcastle is currently still undertaking emergency response works and maintains that an emergency response by the NSW Government to prevent the imminent risk of erosion is still required outside their mandated legislative process.

This should include the immediate appointment of a State Recovery Coordinator.

### **Related Previous decisions:**

- LMM – 27/02/2019 – NSW Budget Submission
- LMM – 25/06/2019 – Offshore Sand Extraction for beach nourishment at Stockton

Beach

- LMM – 24/09/2019 – Stockton Coastal Erosion
- LMM – 19/10/2020 – NSW Budget Submission