
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How does this affect you?

This is a long term plan so on a whole, daily life for residents in the low lying areas is not expected to change. The strategy intends on informing key trigger points where mitigation measures are required to reduce risks and protect the area. Council will monitor the sea levels and have the ability to identify when a trigger point is approaching and begin to source funding for implementation.

Will my property be affected?

Feasibility studies of the options have found that the mitigation measures can be mostly installed in public property limiting any disturbance on private property. This still requires further investigation.

What will happen once the climate changes?

The low lying areas already experience the impacts predicted by climate change. There is flood inundation of roads and private properties regularly during frequent storms and a period of waterlogging by high groundwater levels after the event. These are the impacts expected once the sea levels rise, albeit more frequently and with a longer period of waterlogging after the event.

What amount of sea level rise would cause problems?

It has been predicted by the detailed investigations that once sea levels rise by 0.3m then we would expect king tides to inundate homes in the low lying suburbs. If the sea levels rise by 0.8m then we can expect that the groundwater levels may permanently be at or near the surface at particularly low parts of the area. If the sea levels continue to rise by more than 0.8m then the options proposed in this Strategy may fail and another round of strategic planning would be required to either identify more management measures or consider a retreat from the area.

How could the mitigation measures be funded?

It is recognised that the funds required for the mitigation measures is significant. A range of funding mechanisms have been investigated as part of the investigations made to date. It was found that there is not a single funding method or grant, but rather a combination of sources that can be applied. For instance Council can raise funds over time through development contributions and allocations of the capital works budget. It may also be likely that in future grants are forthcoming from higher levels of government for climate change adaptation.

What can I do to protect my home?

There are a number of things that can be done to protect your own property from damage from surface water inundation. The list below provides a few that can be of benefit:

1. Redevelopment - rebuilding your home in the same location but at a higher level to avoid regular inundation.
2. House raising - raising your existing home to a level that avoids regular inundation (not possible for slab on ground construction).
3. Using flood resilient materials - replacing or relining the materials of your building with water proof/resilient materials.
4. Preparing a flood plan - Developing a plan in case of flood to reduce the risk to people and property.

There may also be measures that can be used to reduce the impacts of rising groundwater levels, however these have not been the focus of this study. Further investigations are still required in relation to this.

What will be the benchmark for measuring sea level rise?

The benchmark shall be set from when the Strategic Paper is adopted. Given sea levels are reported to be rising by approximately 3mm per year it is concluded that the timing for the benchmark is not significant if adoption of the Strategic Position is imminent.

Will the strategic position address existing drainage issues?

The objective of the project is to reduce future flood risk rather than address existing drainage problems. Other projects and programs of Council target drainage issues in the low lying areas such as drainage system renewal, desilting pipelines and the Tide Gate program (see below).

How will the sea levels be monitored?

There are a number of current programs that monitor sea levels both locally and globally. Council would aim to partner with state government agencies that are monitoring sea levels. Council also has a data collection network, with connection to two water level gauges in Newcastle Harbour and the Hunter River, which can be used to supplement sea level monitoring data coming from other programs.

Is the location of the levee fixed?

The levee alignment is preliminary and subject to detailed design and funding. The location has been indicated to balance a number of objectives and constraints using a desktop method. It is acknowledged that there may be some locations where the levee alignment requires adjustment, such as where sports fields appear to be unprotected by the levee. Fortunately there is the flexibility to adjust the levee location because the sports fields are public land and sufficient space permits refinement of the levee alignment.

What is Council doing now to control tidal inundation?

Council has installed flood gates to its stormwater assets that have the potential to surcharge above ground during current king tides. The flood gates are on a program of operation and maintenance where regular inspections remove obstructions. In addition at the time of king tide the gates are inspected at the low tide preceding the high to make our best effort to ensure the gates are operational.

Will property prices be affected by the strategic position?

Council has prepared a strategy that makes its best effort to avoid a reduction in property prices. The intention to protect the area is perceived by Council to indicate that property prices should not be impacted negatively. Given that the majority of the area is already flood-prone, and is indicated as such in Section 149 certificates, the Strategic Position Paper would not increase the amount of properties that are flood-prone.

What happens next now the strategic position is adopted?

Council shall begin with the initial actions of the paper (Phase 1) to monitor sea and ground water levels in addition to investigating funding mechanisms and updates to the science of climate change. No physical actions shall take place until a sea level rise of 0.1m has been reported by the sea level monitoring programs of state government agencies.