

Plain Language Guide

Language in coastal adaptation is often a significant barrier to engagement. Simply put, the content is hard to understand and overly technical.

Whilst the CHRMAP [Guidelines](#) include Key Terminology, it can be handy to present commonly used terms in more user-friendly ways. The attached list of Common Definitions presents an example of some of these.

As with other examples, the local context is critical, as is an assessment of the level of coastal literacy of the community when developing definitions to be published. This Plain Language Guide can be built upon as definitions improve or different communities provide feedback.

Adaptation

Changes made in response to the likely threats and opportunities arising from climate variability and climate change.

Adaptation comes in many forms and can be effected through policy changes or through physical changes. Adaptation can be planned in response to anticipated changes (proactive) or be completed to respond to present impacts such as to respond to a large storm event that has impacted the beach or assets (spontaneous).

Adaptation Pathway

Adaptation planning is about being ready to manage the risks and impacts of coastal processes a location experiences, by planning for the most appropriate decisions and options to implement over time.

A flexible adaptation pathway approach enables the establishment of a decision-making strategy that is made up of a sequence of decision points over time, preventing a decisionmaker from being locked into a risk treatment option (and associated risk management measures), which may not be appropriate for dealing with the long-term problem. The intent is for decision-making to be responsive to changing circumstances over time.

Assets

Something that has value to the decision-maker, community and stakeholders – this can be tangible or intangible, includes consideration of risk and liabilities, and can be positive or negative at different stages of the assets life.

Assets may be natural or man-made and include:

- Beach
- Foreshore reserve (including dunes, flora and fauna)
- Foreshore reserve amenity (including things like car parks, paths, public ablutions, barbeque/picnic/shade areas, playgrounds, infrastructure for public safety and pedestrian access structures such as ramps, stairs and paths)
- Marinas
- Recreational boating facilities
- Facilities to benefit the broader public (such as cafés and restaurants)
- Surf life-saving facilities
- Commercial and residential land
- Protection structures such as groynes, seawalls and sand nourishment.
- Coastal Processes
- Any action of natural forces on the coastal environment (and for the purposes of a CHRMAP, natural forces that affect land areas).

Coastal Hazard

An impact on beaches, land and assets next to the coast, typically associated with erosion and inundation. They can be very apparent after big storms, or can happen more slowly over time. A hazard will typically impact use and enjoyment of the coastal zone, or may cause risk to human safety.

Coastal Zone

Area of water and land that may be influenced by coastal processes. This includes tidal areas of a lagoon or inland water bodies.

Cross shore

Perpendicular to (i.e. coming towards) the shoreline.

Erosion

Refers to shoreline movement where the shoreline shifts landward (ie. moves further inland) as a result of sediment (sand) being transported away by waves, winds and currents, reducing the size (width) of a coastal foreshore reserve and the distance to an asset on the adjoining land.

Event

In coastal planning, typically referring to a storm or damage to assets that require a planning or physical response (i.e. a storm causes damage requiring the Council to replace an asset, or close a set of beach stairs temporarily or permanently).

Flexible Adaptation

Where we have multiple potential responses to adapting to predicted coastal hazards, a flexible pathway allows for decisions to be made at the right time with the most up-to-date information. Flexible pathways give us time to do further studies, or gather more data, so we make better decisions. They also allow for review at a later date, and the potential to change the adaptation approach.

Inundation

The flow of water onto previously dry land. It may either be permanent (for example due to sea level rise) or a temporary occurrence during a storm event.

Inundation does not include circumstances where groundwater may sit at the surface of land and be unable to infiltrate back into the soil.

Longshore

Parallel to the shoreline.

Multi-Criteria Analysis

A decision-making tool that supports the prioritisation of risk management options using multiple criteria as reviewed by the community and government stakeholders.

Multi-criteria analysis, or MCA, is a useful tool to compare options against each other, even if all options have some trade-offs. It allows the selection or prioritisation of options that have the greatest beneficial or the greatest positive attributes, whilst still being able to understand the undesirable attributes of the option. This can then help to manage expectations of any option delivered over time.

Risk

The possibility of something occurring which is uncertain. Identifying a risk does not necessarily mean the risk will occur, rather, it allows for a consideration of what to do in the case that the risk occurs. This allows us to consider future scenarios and how we would respond to them.

Trigger

Triggers are used to help us decide when it is appropriate to make a decision in accordance with the flexible adaptation pathway. Coastal managers can observe and monitor changes over time and wait until triggers are met before implementing an action. Triggers can be physical locations, such as shoreline erosion to a certain line, or event based, such as a significant storm damaging agreed assets, or they can be related to availability of services, such as a loss of power and water or road access that makes habitation untenable.

Vulnerability

Once a risk has been identified, vulnerability is a measure of the impact of the risk occurring. For example, a storm that brings ocean water onto a car parking area, has a lower impact than a storm bringing ocean water through a townsite and flooding housing, shops and schools. How easy it is to recover from a risk occurring is important to understand. Coastal adaptation is always trying to reduce vulnerability to human safety, the environment, the economy and use and enjoyment of the coast.

Wave Overtopping

Water carried over the top of a structure or land due to wave run-up or surge action exceeding the crest.