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Australian Coastal Society Ltd

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**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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**Recent changes to NSW coastal management policies and legislation were greeted with anger and frustration by delegates attending the 21<sup>st</sup> annual NSW Coastal Management Conference in Kiama this week, as a range of speakers expressed serious concerns about their likely impacts on local councils' legal liability and budgets, public beach amenity and effective coastal management.**

"There is no unifying vision for the future of the NSW coast guiding these changes and it appears that the Government has taken a very short sighted and naïve view rather than developing a comprehensive agenda for protecting both the public and private interests in the coast," Mr Angus Gordon spokesperson for the Australian Coastal Society, said today.

"This is a recipe for chaos, not a model for the good governance of NSW coastal management. Coastal landowners are being duped if they think these changes will protect their properties from erosion. They're more likely to deliver a lose, lose, lose outcome whereby landowners who proceed with ad hoc coastal protection works will increase erosion impacts on their neighbours' land, destroy beach amenity and trigger a storm of costly litigation between private landowners," said Mr Gordon.

Many conference delegates felt frustrated and disappointed that NSW Ministers had revoked the NSW planning benchmark for sea level rise, but had failed to attend the conference to provide any adequate justification for the decision or to explain how sea level rise or other climate change impacts should now be managed.

"Plainly there's a real disconnect operating here. The Ministers made these far reaching decisions, but the government officials present at the conference had difficulty explaining them. The NSW Chief Scientist has publicly said the science behind the sea level rise planning benchmarks is sound. However, instead of a consistent state-wide approach the Government has left it to local councils to navigate the issue of climate change impacts with no guidance," he said.

The Australian Coastal Society doesn't support the current reforms and we want them revisited via a genuine process of consultation that engages all affected stakeholders. The NSW Government should form a new, independent coastal advisory council to assist it to develop a coherent vision for the NSW coast before proceeding with changes to the legal and policy framework for coastal management.

The Coastal Conference is being attended by delegates from 110 NSW coastal organisations, including local councils, catchment management authorities, community groups, not-for-profit bodies and private sector coastal management consultancies.

The 21<sup>st</sup> annual coastal management awards will be presented tonight at the conference dinner.

**For more information and interviews contact Angus Gordon on 0410 534 624.**