

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP) Fact Sheet

The CHRMAP is a plan to help all levels of government and the community understand where it is safe to build and what needs protecting – and how this may change over time.

The Australian Government partnered with the WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) to develop the CHRMAP to provide a long-term plan to deal with coastal erosion and flooding caused by climate change on CKI.

What is a CHRMAP?

- A **Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan** (CHRMAP) provides long-term guidance to government, property owners and the community on managing local coastal risks, such as erosion and flooding.
- A CHRMAP is prepared in line with WA State Planning Policy 2.6 – Coastal Planning, which applies on CKI.

Aims of the CKI CHRMAP

- Ensure land in coastal zones is managed for public access, recreation and conservation.
- Protect public safety and reduce risks from coastal erosion and flooding.
- Minimise building and activities on land at risk from coastal erosion and inundation.
- Make sure land use and activities do not accelerate coastal erosion, worsen flooding risks or negatively impact use of public reserves.

Coastal hazards on CKI

- With an average elevation of just 1.5m above sea level, CKI is vulnerable to coastal hazards and impacts of climate change.
- CKI is already experiencing significant coastal erosion, storm surges and frequent flooding.
- Coastal hazards on CKI are expected to worsen in the future with higher sea levels, more intense storms and higher groundwater levels.
- The increasing risk of coastal hazards poses a threat to the long-term suitability of CKI's two settlements, including the homes and livelihoods of the community.

CHRMAP development process

The CKI CHRMAP was prepared over several years – nearly 10 years of technical research.

The key stages in developing the CHRMAP were:

- undertaking the 2022 CKI Coastal Vulnerability Study to identify and assess coastal hazard risks now and in the future
- informing the community of coastal hazards and identifying the assets and areas they value most
- developing adaptation options and identifying the community's preferred options
- seeking public submissions on the draft CHRMAP.

Community consultation

- The CKI community was consulted at all stages of preparing the CHRMAP. This included on-island discussions over many years.
- Community members brought their local knowledge, expertise and lived experience to the CHRMAP development process.
- The community was asked how they use and value the coastline, and their preferred options for managing coastal risks.
- When the draft CHRMAP was released in 2025, about one-quarter of the community made a submission on it. This feedback has been incorporated into the final report.

Recommended actions and adaptation options

- The CHRMAP recommends a flexible management approach over time as coastal risks evolve.
- It is recommended the CHRMAP is reviewed every five years to reflect new information. This timeframe is shorter than usual due to CKI's significant coastal risks.

Immediate and short-term recommendations

- The CHRMAP recommends further studies and planning, such as emergency management planning and heritage management plans.
- In the short-term, the CHRMAP recommends protecting settlements and critical assets with seawalls and other coastal defences.
- Where assets are so vulnerable that protection is not viable, they may need to be moved to other areas on CKI.

Long-term recommendations

- The CHRMAP recommends community and government undertake settlement planning to identify the most suitable long-term option to protect lives in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable way.

Next steps

- The Australian Government will work with the Shire of CKI and local community on a long-term response to the impacts of climate change on CKI.
- A Ministerial Working Group is leading the Government's response. This will include consultation with community representatives through a formal community consultation forum.
- The Government is already progressing a number of recommendations in the CHRMAP, including Home Island flooding investigations and coastal infrastructure planning.
- The Government is also investing \$23.3 million to improve emergency preparedness and safety on CKI, including improvements to cyclone shelters and seawalls, while continuing to plan for the future in consultation with the community.

What are the options for adapting to coastal hazards?

The WA Government's State Planning Policy 2.6 – Coastal Planning identifies a hierarchy of options for adapting to coastal hazards. These include:

- **Avoid:** Identify future 'no build' areas and use planning controls to prevent new development in areas that are vulnerable now or in the future
- **Planned or Managed Retreat:** Withdraw, relocate or abandon assets that are vulnerable; ecosystems are allowed to move landward as sea levels rise
- **Accommodate:** Continue to use the land but accommodate changes by building on piles, converting land uses or growing flood or salt-tolerant plants
- **Protect:** Use hard structures (e.g. sea walls) or soft solutions (e.g. dunes and vegetation) to protect assets from the sea.