



**Coastcare,
Australia's community-based
coastal management program:
an effective model of
integrated coastal management?**

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Abstract

This thesis critically assesses Coastcare's role in contributing to an integrated and participatory approach to coastal management in Australia. Coastcare, one of Australia's suite of coastal programs under the National Heritage Trust, had the principle objective of engaging local community in managing the coast.

Coastcare represented an internationally unique example of an operational Integrated coastal management (ICM) initiative. The Program fulfilled the requirements of an integrated approach including intergovernmental co-operation, financial commitment and community involvement. ICM has been adopted internationally, during the last decade, as a sound approach for ecologically sustainable development and for coastal resource use planning. Despite the acceptance and abundance of ICM efforts around the world, little critical analysis of programs is available. Many of the most complex aspects of integration – the development of relationships and trust between agency and community were beginning to emerge through Coastcare.

This thesis demonstrates that within each of the states and the Northern Territory the Coastcare program functioned quite distinctly as a consequence of the existence and prominence of individual state coastal policies, state coastal agency commitment to the program, finances available to buttress the program beyond the state/Commonwealth formula as well as social, cultural and demographic features.

Coastcare's contribution to a participatory style of management is assessed by this thesis. Stakeholder interview responses were analysed according to an evaluation framework, based on the principles of participatory democracy, and designed to assess different elements of community participation. This thesis concludes that one of Coastcare's greatest strengths lies in its active capacity building. The active engagement of groups undertaking localised works has raised awareness of coastal processes and coastal management governance and systems.

The study contributes to a greater understanding of the processes of an integrated approach to coastal management by providing a detailed analysis of the various pathways of communication and cooperation between Program stakeholders (Commonwealth, state and local government, the program team and community) that have developed through Coastcare. Factors assisting the three tiers of government and community working together are explored along with the barriers that impeded progress of the Program. Its achievements will contribute towards a greater understanding of sustainable approaches to coastal management

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Beverley Clarke

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