



**Media Release**

**19.08.08**

## **Climate Change – Australia’s Top Coastal Priority**

The impacts of climate change will be the key issue discussed by Australia’s foremost coastal scientists, planners, managers and policy makers at a four-day national conference that commenced in Darwin today.

On its opening day the **Coast to Coast 2008** conference will examine and discuss the impacts of rising sea levels and storm surges on Australia’s coastal cities and coastlines - and importantly how coastal planners should deal with it.

Conference Convenor and Northern Territory Government marine scientist Professor Karen Edyvane said this is the first time climate change is dominating debate and learning at this important national coastal forum.

“Day 1 of the **Coast to Coast 2008** Conference is about assessing the risk, monitoring and management of predicted climate change impacts and options for coastal management,” said Professor Edyvane.

“A range of plenary and keynote speakers have discussed how climate change is having significant impacts on Australia’s coasts, cities, coastal communities and biodiversity.

“Earlier this morning the plenary speaker, Professor Will Steffen from the Australian National University, presented the latest scientific evidence that indicates previous reports of climate change may have greatly underestimated the speed at which our climate is changing.

“One of our keynote speakers, Dr Jo Mummery from the Australian Government’s Department of Climate Change, then discussed the vulnerability of Australia’s coastal zone to climate change and outline national approaches to coastal risk management.

“And following that our second keynote speaker, Dr Ian Poiner of the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences, discussed the impacts of climate change on coral reefs.”

Professor Edyvane said other topics to be covered throughout the day include natural resource management and coastal partnerships, coastal development, tourism and recreational use of the coastal zone, integrated coastal zone management, coastal-marine monitoring programs, and development of marine protected areas.

“A special all-day session later this week will also be devoted to marine dredging and the protection of ecological values, an emerging environmental issue for tropical Australia where there are increasing port and other coastal development pressures,” said Professor Edyvane.

Coast to Coast is a biennial national coastal conference that focuses debate, discussion and learning across a range of coastal and marine issues.

*Coast to Coast Collaboration: Crossing Boundaries* is being held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 18-22 August 2008. For more information go to [www.coast2coast.org.au](http://www.coast2coast.org.au).

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**Media are welcome to attend the conference**