

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NEW SOUTH WALES) POLICY ON OFFSHORE SAND EXTRACTION

PREAMBLE

The National Trust has had a long-term interest in the impact of sand extraction on the environment and, over many years, has called for the cessation of sand mining on the Kurnell Peninsula. The Trust has also made representations regarding extraction in the MacDonal Valley, on the Hawkesbury River and on the Newnes Plateau. More recently concerns have been raised over extraction on the Somersby Plateau near Gosford where sand is gained by quarrying and crushing sandstone.

Sand is a vital resource for the building and construction industry but the extraction industry is fragmented and uncoordinated. Despite the apparent extent and ubiquity of sand and sandstone, Sydney is facing a looming shortage of building sand. The sand resource on the Kurnell Peninsula is now almost exhausted. The Penrith Lakes scheme is approaching the end of its life. Sand extraction and processing have a significant impact on scenic landscapes and habitats. Water consumption and disposal pose threats to wetlands and groundwater. There is substantial energy consumption in extraction, processing and transport and a range of flow-on impacts from transport and transport infrastructure upgrades. A National Trust Position Paper – Sand Extractionⁱ adopted in April, 2006, has been revised and re-endorsed as an accompanying document to this Policy.

POLICY

1. The National Trust will urge that all possible steps be taken to minimise both future needs for sand and the environmental impacts associated with its extraction, particularly greater recycling of materials and the greater use of sustainable timber.
2. Recognising that there is a continuing demand for sand leading to the need for the development of major new resources, the National Trust urges that the NSW Government conduct a full and open inquiry into all aspects of sand supply, as a precursor to implementation of a comprehensive strategy.
3. The National Trust will urge that there be a well-informed public debate on the issue of the extraction of offshore sand resources.
4. In view of Commonwealth jurisdiction over off-shore waters and the provisions of the EPBC Act regarding protection of sea fauna such as cetaceans and seals, the Trust will urge that any proposed development in this zone should be assessed against the highest environmental protection standards.
5. If offshore extraction of sand occurs, the National Trust urges that the general principles set out in the National Trust Position Paper – Sand Extractionⁱⁱ should be adopted. These include but are not limited to:
 - There should be no impact on beaches and offshore currents.
 - Extraction should not be permitted close to rocky reefs, in high ecological value areas or close to known wrecks and other culturally significant sites.
 - Protocols should be established to ensure that previously unknown artifacts, encountered during excavation, are immediately identified and assessed and necessary adaptations made to the extraction plan.
 - Onshore facilities for offshore extraction should be sited to minimise road transport and encourage greater use of rail transport.
 - There should be no lasting impacts on fish and other marine biota and, during extraction, impacts on both commercial and recreational fisheries should be minimised.
 - There should be no impacts during exploration and extraction on marine mammals. If necessary, work should cease during migration periods or at other times when marine animals may be at risk. All operations should have an approved mammal management plan.

- The depth and area extracted at any one time should be such that there is no impediment to recolonisation by the natural biota of the sea bed.
 - There should be minimal use of freshwater in sand preparation when offshore sand is landed and there should be no contamination of surface or groundwater during the treatment phase.
 - There should be full and open assessment of each individual project. All relevant operational plans should be available for public input at the application phase.
6. Accepting that sand extracted off-shore could be utilised both in the construction industry and for beach nourishment, the assessment by the Trust of the merits of a proposal for off-shore extraction will be independent of the proposed use of the sand.
7. The National Trust would oppose any offshore sand extraction, mining or other development which threatens to “capture” sand resources which would otherwise be involved in balancing the sand budget of beaches.

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ⁱ *National Trust Position Paper – Sand Extraction, Adopted April, 2006*

ⁱⁱ *National Trust Position Paper – Sand Extraction, revised and adopted February, 2013*