

Evaluation Report

Climate Ready Coasts Program

LGA South Australia

22 June 2026

HealthQ

darren@healthq.com.au

+61 412 157 326

Acknowledgement

Traditional custodians of the country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where this evaluation is taking place and honour their connection to country and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

Glossary / Abbreviations

ACCN	Adelaide Coastal Councils Network
CHAP	Coastal Hazard Adaptation Plan
CPB	SA Coast Protection Board
CoP	Community of Practice
CRC	SA Climate Ready Coasts
DEW	Department for Environment and Water
ESC	Executive Steering Committee
HealthQ	Health Q Consulting
LGA	Local Government Association South Australia
PMG	Program Management Group
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SA	South Australia
SACCA	SA Coastal Councils Alliance

Contents

Executive Summary ____ 1

1. Introduction ____ 7
2. Evaluation design and methodology ____ 10
3. Program design and implementation ____ 13
4. Program outcomes and impact ____ 18
5. Efficiency and sustainability ____ 30
6. Conclusions ____ 33

Executive Summary

LGA South Australia (LGA) appointed Health Q Consulting (HealthQ) in February 2026 to undertake an independent evaluation of the Climate Ready Coasts (CRC) program.

Background

The CRC program was initiated to accelerate coastal adaptation planning and drive a more strategic and integrated approach to coastal management in SA. The premise of the CRC is that minimising the costs and impacts of accelerating coastal hazards requires strategic and systemic action, and all levels of government benefit from this work being undertaken in a consistent, evidence-based and well-coordinated manner.

The intended **outcomes of the program** were to:

- Coordinate consistent approaches to coastal hazard adaptation
- Improve understanding of coastal risk
- Increase capacity and knowledge of coastal hazard adaptation planning
- Create evidence-based decisions and investments in the coast.

The CRC program commenced in 2023 with initial funding from the Australian government (Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program), state government (SA Coast Protection Board), and local government (Local Government Research and Development Scheme), for three years from 2023 to 2026. In early 2026, the CRC program was funded through the Australian government's Disaster Ready Fund for a further three years, which will see the program continue until 2029.

The program was designed to be delivered in three stages; Stage 1 – establish the program's foundations, Stage 2 – the key delivery stage through projects and activities that accelerate adaptation planning and Stage 3 – a consolidation of learnings from the program to inform future action.

The program is led by LGA working in partnership with the SA Coast Protection Board (CPB), Department for Environment and Water (DEW), Adelaide Coastal Councils Network (ACCN), and SA Coastal Councils Alliance (SACCA).

The **objectives of this evaluation** were to:

1. Assess the impact and effectiveness of CRC against the defined program outcomes, and
2. Identify lessons to inform the future phases of the program.

A mixed-methods methodology was used, including:

- Review and analysis of key program documents and data,
- Consultations with members of the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) and Program Management Group (PMG), and
- Surveys of Community of Practice (CoP) participants and program partners.

A total of 35 stakeholders participated across consultations and surveys, representing local and state government agencies and program partners (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder group	People consulted
Executive Steering Committee (previous and current)	8
Program Management Group	7
Community of Practice Survey	16
Partnership Survey (one per organisation)	4
Total	**35**

Findings

Overall, the evaluation found that the CRC program has made a significant and positive contribution to progressing its intended outcomes of improving coordination, strengthening understanding of coastal risk, building sector capacity and knowledge, and supporting more evidence-based coastal planning and decision-making across South Australia. While program outcomes continue to emerge at different rates amongst councils due to differences in coastal adaptation maturity levels and resourcing, the program has successfully laid the foundations for more consistent, strategic and defensible coastal hazard adaptation over time.

The successful extension of Commonwealth funding to 2029 enhances the program's continuity, provides the opportunity for gradual embedding and refinement of resources, expansion of council CHAP adoption, and is reflective of the sustained effort required to manage climate-driven coastal hazards.

A summary of **key findings** is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation key findings

Domain/Outcome	Key findings
Appropriateness (Program design, implementation and governance)	• The evaluation found that the CRC program was well designed and highly appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes. • Stakeholder consultations identified strong local government and coastal sector support and increased alignment between state and local government as a key achievement of the program which underpinned CRC's effectiveness. • Governance structures enabled effective oversight and adaptability, allowing the program to respond to stakeholder feedback and emerging priorities. • The program's staged delivery model, dual workstreams, flexibility and alignment to stakeholder readiness and trust, enabled positive stakeholder engagement and uptake. • An opportunity for improvement exists to establish a lessons learned log. This would support more consistent documentation of challenges, adjustments and effective practices as they emerge.

Domain/Outcome	Key findings
Outcome 1: Coordinate consistent approaches to coastal hazard adaptation	• The evaluation found that the CRC program has made significant progress in establishing the foundations for more consistent coastal hazard adaptation planning. • The Coastal Hazard Adaptation Plan (CHAP) Guidelines, compendiums, tools, and improved datasets, are a valuable output that has provided an adopted local and state reference point for coastal adaptation planning. These resources were identified by stakeholders as a key achievement of the program that are likely to remain useful beyond the life of the program.
Outcome 2: Improve understanding of coastal risk	• The CRC program has contributed to improved awareness and understanding of coastal risk, particularly among practitioners engaged in program activities. • Stakeholders reported increased baseline literacy and a shared language around coastal adaptation, attributable to engagement activities and capacity-building initiatives. • Despite improvements, understanding of coastal risk remains uneven across councils. In many cases, knowledge is concentrated within specific roles or teams, and broader organisational understanding of coastal risk is still developing.
Outcome 3: Increase capacity and knowledge of coastal hazard adaptation planning	• The CRC program has made a substantial contribution to building capacity and knowledge of coastal hazard adaptation planning. • A key strength of the program has been its blended approach, combining formal resources with practical, hands-on support and peer learning. • Capacity uplift has been achieved through the development and implementation of the CHAP Guidelines, council adaptation grant projects, and active learning forums, including the CoP, training programs, and direct support to councils.
Outcome 4: Create evidence-based decisions and impact in the coast	• The CRC program has begun to influence more evidence-based approaches to decision-making. • The introduction of agreed methodologies (CHAP Guidelines) and improved data has supported more consistent and defensible planning decisions, helping councils to better assess risks and prioritise actions. • Observable changes in evidence-based and investment decisions are still emerging. Stakeholders consistently noted that CRC has primarily laid the groundwork for improved decisions, rather than directly driving large-scale investment outcomes at this foundational stage of the program.

Domain/Outcome	Key findings
Efficiency and sustainability	• The CRC program has been delivered efficiently, remaining on budget while largely achieving planned outputs through a partnership-based model that maximises value. • Maintaining program momentum depends on continued policy, institutional and funding support, particularly as coastal adaptation competes with other government priorities. • The CRC program has made significant investments in coastal data and taken steps to improve coordination and accessibility. However, the long-term value of these investments will depend on ongoing data governance and ensuring that intended users can access, understand, and apply the data effectively. • There is an opportunity to establish formal succession and sustainability planning to ensure program continuity and implementing ongoing processes for updating foundational resources and data.

Recommendations

The evaluation has presented the following recommendations for consideration by LGA and CRC partners. The recommendations are presented in the order in which they appear in the report and are not ranked by priority or importance.

Ref	Recommendation	Rationale
1	Implement clear succession planning and knowledge-transfer arrangements.	The evaluation found that effective program delivery has been highly dependent on a single Program Manager. This presents a knowledge and sustainability risk for a complex, multi-partner program. Structured succession planning and knowledge transfer will reduce reliance on an individual, strengthen continuity of delivery and retain critical institutional knowledge.
2	Continue to maintain the maturity database, with regular updating of councils' maturity assessment on a set cycle (e.g., annually or at key milestones).	Councils' coastal adaptation maturity assessments will become outdated as capability and planning evolve. The maturity assessment is an important asset that will continue to support the prioritisation of effort in the next phase of the program (2026-2029) and should be continued post-2029 funding. Ongoing maintenance will support the evidence-base to remain current and comparable, enabling better targeting of support, progress tracking, prioritising of investment, and provide a consistent, longitudinal dataset to support future program evaluation.

Ref	Recommendation	Rationale
3	Establish a structured learning and continuous improvement approach, including a formal lessons learned log and ongoing engagement with state, national and international coastal adaptation networks.	There is an opportunity to strengthen how the CRC program captures and applies learning, and to ensure it remains abreast with evolving national and international practice. This will ensure program tools, guidance and approaches remain relevant and aligned with emerging coastal adaptation practice.
4	Provide stakeholders with targeted, skills-based training focussed on the practical application of the CHAP Guidelines and associated resources and data, this could be delivered through existing mechanisms such as the CoP forum.	Stakeholder feedback indicated that while the CHAP Guidelines and supporting resources are widely regarded as credible and valuable, some practitioners would benefit from more practical, hands-on guidance to apply them effectively. This would strengthen practitioner confidence in applying the Guidelines and working with external consultants.
5	CRC program partners provide councils with both targeted project scoping support and a standard RFQ template for CHAP projects in CRC 2.0.	Some council grantees experienced procurement delays in progressing their CHAP projects due to complexities procuring external consultants and clearly scoping projects. Together, this recommendation would streamline procurement processes, support consistency in consultancy briefs, and reduce delays particularly for councils with lower planning maturity or limited procurement capacity.
6	DEW to strengthen data communication and capacity-building for intended users of the coastal hazard datasets.	While the Statewide Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment has substantially improved the availability of consistent, statewide erosion risk information, its impact is currently constrained by limited awareness and understanding of how the data should be accessed, interpreted, and appropriately applied. The recommended action will build practitioner and decision-maker confidence, support more consistent and appropriate application of coastal risk information and strengthen the practical value of the assessment.
7	CRC 2.0 to support councils to build organisation-wide engagement and buy-in for coastal adaptation through tailored guidance and educational resources.	Sustained and consistent coastal hazard adaptation requires engagement across the full range of council functions, as well as approaches that recognise differing levels of readiness and capacity. This includes equipping councils to engage their planners, asset managers, finance staff, executive leadership, and elected members through the CHAP process.

Ref	Recommendation	Rationale
8	CRC partners explore long-term pathways to progressively anchor key coordination and assurance functions within state government coastal governance arrangements, while maintaining the collaborative partnership with local government.	The CRC program has successfully established effective coordination, assurance and capability building functions through the partnership-based delivery model; however, these functions are currently largely program dependent and reliant on short term funding. This recommendation will support long-term continuity, institutional ownership and policy influence beyond the life of program funding.
9	CRC partners undertake a sustainability planning process to collaboratively identify and advocate for future funding models that support the implementation of CHAP recommendations, not just planning activities.	The long-term sustainability of coastal adaptation efforts is constrained by limited funding pathways for implementation. Even with additional Disaster Ready Fund funding for CRC 2.0, the cost of implementing CHAP recommendations, particularly infrastructure and large scale adaptation actions, is not in scope for this funding which presents a significant gap in progressing from adaptation planning to action. This recommendation will help ensure that evidence-based plans translate into on-ground adaptation outcomes, improve the return on investment from planning activity, and increase the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the CRC program.
10	CRC partners explore mechanisms that will encourage continued uptake, maintenance of CHAPs and use of the Guidelines beyond time-limited program funding.	Program partners have identified the importance of supporting the continuity and ongoing application of CHAPs. This includes both supporting councils to maintain and update their CHAPs over time and sustain the use of the Guidelines as standard practice. This will help maintain momentum and embed CHAP practice into longer term decision-making frameworks.

1. Introduction

Health Q Consulting (HealthQ) was appointed by LGA to undertake an independent evaluation of the CRC program.

CRC Program

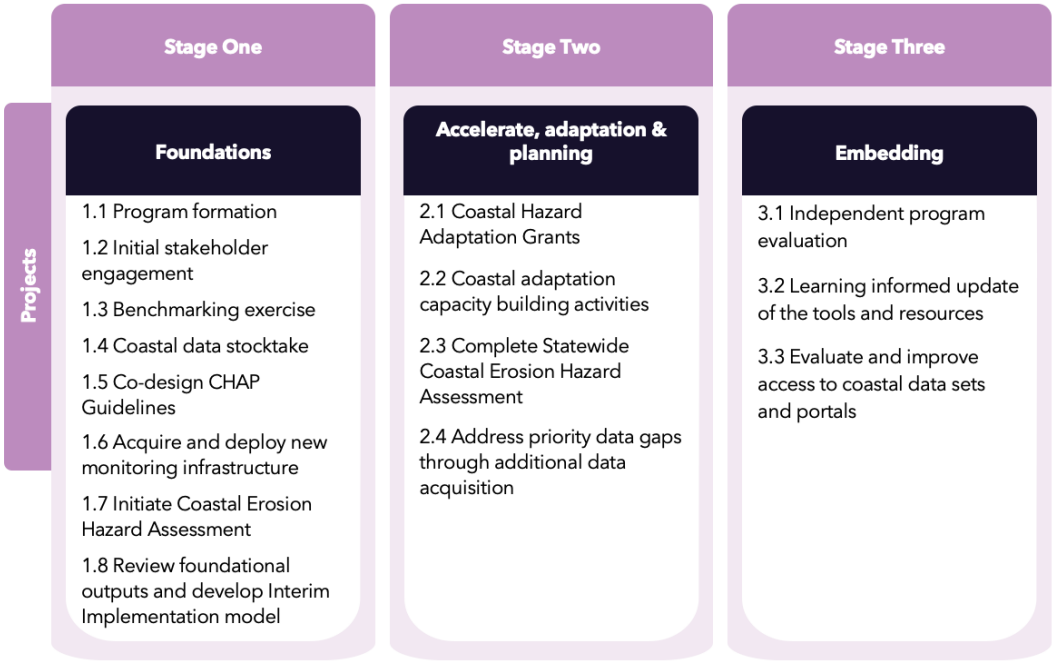
The CRC program has been initiated to accelerate coastal adaptation planning and drive a more strategic and integrated approach to coastal management in SA. The premise of the CRC is that minimising the costs and impacts of accelerating coastal hazards requires strategic and systemic action, and all levels of government benefit from this work being undertaken in a consistent, evidence-based and well-coordinated manner.

The intended **outcomes of the program** were to:

- Coordinate consistent approaches to coastal hazard adaptation
- Improve understanding of coastal risk
- Increase capacity and knowledge of coastal hazard adaptation planning
- Create evidence-based decisions and investments in the coast.

The CRC program commenced in 2023 with initial funding for three years to 2026. The program was designed as a three stage partnership-delivered initiative (Figure 1). The activities in Figure 1 have been updated from the original program plan[1] to reflect the amended projects as per the approved variation with the Commonwealth.

Figure 1. SA Climate Ready Coasts Program high-level stages and projects



The intended aims of the three stages of the program were[1]:

[1] LGA SA. (2023, March). SA Climate Ready Coasts Program Plan. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1418501/SA-Climate-Ready-Coasts-Program-Plan-March-2023-Approved.pdf

- **Stage One**: To establish the program foundations by assessing the current state of coastal adaptation in SA, identifying needs, establishing methods, and commencing coastal data acquisition.
- **Stage Two**: To implement projects and activities that accelerate coastal hazard adaptation planning.
- **Stage Three**: To consolidate the program learnings to shape priorities and directions for ongoing and future action.

The program is led by LGA working in partnership with the CPB, DEW, ACCN, and SACCA, reflecting a deliberate design choice to drive a coordinated, system level approach to coastal adaptation across state and local government.

The CRC program was co-funded by the:

- Australian Government, Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program
- State government, CPB
- Local government, Local Government Research and Development Scheme.

In early 2026, LGA was successful in receiving further federal funding through the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund, which will enable the next phase of work for this program (CRC 2.0) to be delivered between 2026 and 2029.

Program workstreams

Program delivery was organised through interconnected projects across two complementary workstreams, Data (led by DEW) and Adaptation Planning (led by LGA). The projects themselves were delivered by a combination of personnel, including consultants, contractors, program partners, and through grants to councils. The design approach recognised the importance and need for both (1) a strong, consistent evidence-base relating to hazards and risk, and (2) the capability and processes for councils and other key stakeholders and partners to translate that evidence into plans and decisions.

Program governance

The CRC program was governed through a three tier structure designed to provide strategic oversight, coordinated management, and day-to-day delivery support across participating partners and stakeholders (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Program governance structure



Purpose and structure of this document

This **Evaluation Report** presents the CRC program evaluation findings and recommendations. The balance of the Report is presented as follows:

Chapter	Description
Chapter 2	This chapter presents the evaluation design and methodology used for the evaluation of the CRC program.
Chapter 3	This chapter presents the findings of the evaluation with respect to the program design and implementation.
Chapter 4	This chapter presents the findings of this evaluation with respect to assessment against the CRC program outcomes.
Chapter 5	This chapter presents the findings of this evaluation with respect to efficiency and sustainability.
Chapter 6	This chapter presents the summary of findings of the evaluation.

2. Evaluation design and methodology

This chapter presents the methodology used for the evaluation of the CRC program.

Evaluation objectives and scope

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide an independent, evidence-based and stakeholder informed evaluation of the CRC program. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Assess the impact and effectiveness of CRC against the defined program outcomes, and
2. Identify lessons to inform the future phases of the program.

Evaluation Framework

An Evaluation Framework was developed to ensure an agreed approach so that the evaluation objectives and expectations were met. The framework was informed by a review of key internal documents and data provided by the CRC Program Manager, a project initiation meeting held with LGA and preliminary key stakeholder consultations. The Evaluation Framework included:

1. Contextual background and information pertinent to the evaluation.
2. An evaluation matrix which detailed the evaluation domains, specific lines of enquiry within these domains and data collection activities and methods **(Appendix A)**.
3. A suite of data collection tools, designed to facilitate answering of the questions identified in the Evaluation Framework.
4. An updated and detailed program logic model.

Logic model

An initial high level program logic model was developed at the beginning of the CRC program which outlined the CRC program staging and anticipated outcomes. This was updated and expanded at the beginning of this evaluation to articulate in detail the program activities and the associated outputs, outcomes and impacts of the program. This was to enable the evaluation to assess the performance of the CRC program and the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended. The detailed program logic is included in **Appendix B.**

Evaluation domains

HealthQ assessed the CRC program across the evaluation domains presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Evaluation Domains

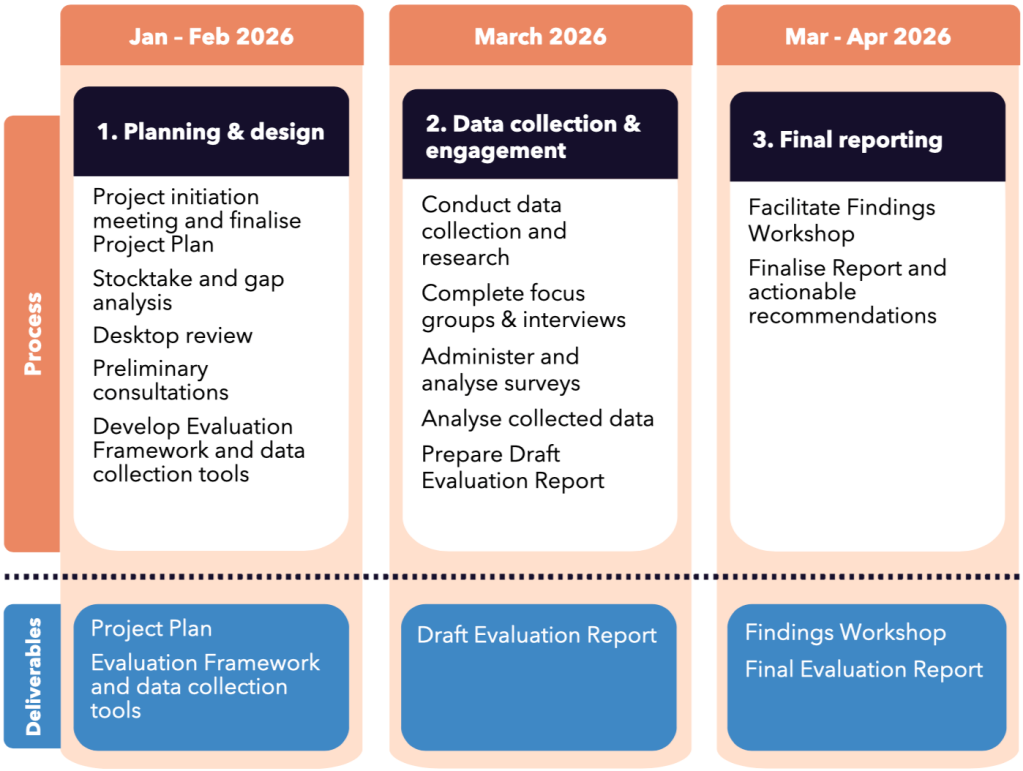
Domain	Sub domain	Strategic Considerations
Appropriateness	1. Local need & context 2. Implementation 3. Governance arrangements	• Barriers • Enablers • Opportunities for improvement
Effectiveness & impact	4. Program outputs 5. Program outcomes 6. Governance arrangements	

Domain	Sub domain	Strategic Considerations
Efficiency & sustainability	7. Network development 8. Program sustainability	

Evaluation Staging

The evaluation was designed to be delivered across three stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Evaluation Staging



Data collection

The evaluation commenced with a review and analysis of existing program documents and data against the evaluation lines of enquiry. These documents and data sources are listed in **Appendix C**. In addition to existing data collection, the evaluation included the design and administration of additional data collection tools discussed below.

Communities of Practice Survey

The Coastal Adaptation Community of Practice (CoP) is an informal forum for those working on coastal adaptation and related projects to share information and learn from each other. It comprises officers from state and local government. The CoP survey was distributed by HealthQ to a distribution list of approximately 175 members. Three email invitations were sent to members between 5 March and 19 March 2026. Due to low response rates the survey was extended to 17 April 2026, with a final email reminder sent by the Program Manager, Climate Ready Coasts. The survey received **16 responses**, with a 9.1% response rate. All 16 completed surveys were included in the analysis. There were 8 partial responses, none of which were eligible to be included in the survey analysis.

Of the 16 respondents, the organisations represented included:

- Councils, 56.3% (n=9)
- Other State government agency, 31.3% (n = 5)
- DEW, 6.3% (n=1)
- ACCN, 6.3% (n=1)

The Councils that completed the survey were: Alexandrina, City of Onkaparinga, City of Playford, City of Port Adelaide Enfield, District Council of Streaky Bay, Kingston District Council, SA (not specified), City of Salisbury, and York Peninsula Council.

Other State government agencies included Landscape Boards (not specified), Department for Infrastructure and Transport, Green Adelaide, and Landscapes SA.

The CoP survey questions are included in **Appendix D**.

Partnership survey

The evaluation adopted the Vic Health 'Partnership Analysis Tool[2]. The formal partners of the CRC program (LGA, DEW, CPB, ACCN, SACCA) were invited to complete the survey tool online with **4 responses received**. The tool considers that partnerships can be considered on a continuum ranging from networking through to a more mature and embedded relationship of collaboration.

Stakeholder interviews

HealthQ undertook individual or group consultations with a total of 15 people which are summarised in Table 4 with details of participants and consultation guides in **Appendix E.**

Table 4: Summary of stakeholder consultation

Stakeholder group	Number of people consulted
Executive Steering Committee (ESC), previous and current	8
Program Management Group (PMG)	7
Total	**15**

[2] VicHealth. (2023). *Partnerships analysis tool*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/VH_Partnerships-Analysis-Tool_web%5B1%5D.pdf

3. Program design and implementation

This chapter presents the evaluation's findings in respect to the 'Appropriateness' evaluation domain covering the program design, governance, project management, implementation and partnerships.

Program design

The program design, facilitated by the program management and governance structure, proved to be adaptable and responsive to emerging needs and observations as the program progressed. This adaptive approach is evidenced by several adjustments, including both resource refinements and scope changes undertaken as the program responded to feedback and emerging needs, including:

- Renaming of the CHAP standards to the CHAP Guidelines in response to early consultation feedback that the language of 'standards' could be misinterpreted as technical standards, and to align with consistent language used interstate[3].
- An iterative, co-design approach was used to develop the CHAP Guidelines. Draft guidelines prepared by consultants (Hatch), informed by the Benchmarking Review and Stakeholder Engagement foundation projects, were then refined to interim guidelines following consultation with the PMG and an independent peer review by an interstate consultant (Aither)[4]. The CHAP Guidelines were finalised after broader sector consultation to form the final published version[5].
- A new milestone addition, the Interim Implementation Model[6] was developed to support the effective implementation of the CHAP Guidelines.
- The data subproject, 'Updated sand drift and acid sulphate soils datasets' was rescoped to 'Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment and Mapping', in response to identification that the former datasets, while older, remained fit for purpose, whereas a gap existed for erosion assessment[3,7].
- A reallocation of $145,000 within the budget to expand the Coastal Adaptation Grant funding pool, due to efficiency savings in other areas.
- Establishment of an Expert Panel on Coastal Adaptation in response to feedback identified during the Benchmarking Review by Hatch[8], and the Stakeholder Engagement project undertaken by URPS[9].

[3] LGA SA., & SAFECOM. (2024, 01 October). Appendix A: Implementation Plan.

[4] Aither. (2024 July). Climate Ready Coasts: Independent Peer Review of draft Coastal Hazard Adaptation Planning Guidelines.

[5] Local Government Association of South Australia (2025 May). Coastal Hazard Adaptation Planning Guidelines. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/1809088/Coastal-Hazard-Adaptation-Planning-Guidelines-May-2025.pdf

[6] Local Government Association of South Australia. (2024 August). SA Climate Ready Coasts: Interim Implementation Model. *Draft for Consultation*.

[7] SA Climate Ready Coasts, Department for Environment and Water, Government of South Australia, *Data Workstream Update August 2024, DEW-Data-Workstream-Update-August-2024.pdf*

[8] HATCH. (2024). Climate Ready Coasts Foundation Project: Coastal Adaptation Planning Benchmarking Review. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/1557192/Coastal-Adaptation-Planning-Benchmarking-Review-March-2024.pdf

[9] URPS. (2024). Engagement Summary Report Stage One: Climate Ready Coasts Foundations Project.

- The priority data acquisition in Stage 3 was rescoped multiple times, with a final decision to use a prioritisation approach, using existing data cross-referenced with the earlier council maturity assessment to determine sites for prioritisation[10].

Both the ESC and PMG reported that the sequencing of stages and the two stream model was a strength, with the stages and streams effectively informing one another whilst also allowing specialisation and focus. Of note, there were no detractors regarding this aspect of the program design from these stakeholder groups.

Importantly, this adaptive approach also reflected the need to progress at a pace aligned with stakeholder readiness and trust. While some elements of the program took longer than initially anticipated and others progressed more quickly, this variation was a function of the program responding to stakeholder feedback and building shared understanding and confidence over time.

There was also support from the CoP surveyed group with more than 62.6% (n=10) of respondents stating that the CRC program's design and resources provided support to them in carrying out coastal adaption activities to either a 'great extent' or 'moderate extent'.

The evaluation found that the **staged delivery model and the activities within each stage were appropriate to achieve the CRC's intended outcomes.** Stage One was pivotal to the success of the program, establishing the baseline conditions and settings that informed the remainder of the program. Its eight interrelated projects, allocated across the data or adaptation planning workstreams were logical in focus and order of planned delivery, informing the subsequent activities and stages. The changes in program scope discussed above collectively demonstrate a program that functioned with an adaptative and responsive delivery model, with governance arrangements that enabled evidence-informed refinement of activities, terminology, milestones and data priorities as the program progressed.

Governance and project management

It was evident from the evaluation consultations that the **governance of this project, design and operation was considered successful and fit for purpose by stakeholders.** The evaluation found that the ESC has been effective in delivering its role of providing strategic oversight, guidance and decision-making. The PMG has been engaged and actively attended, providing valuable practitioner guidance and delivery level insights. The active involvement of the PMG enabled most issues and risks to be identified and addressed early, often preventing escalation to the ESC while ensuring that key issues and proposed solutions were escalated for decision-making when required.

The stability of membership of the key governance forums has been challenging over the course of the project. This was confirmed through the consultations which identified numerous changes in DEW representation at both the ESC and PMG levels. Changeover and commencement of new staff have at times slowed project continuity, however, despite the internal staffing restructures and challenges experienced by DEW they have remained committed to ongoing program representation.

The program was strengthened with the CRC successfully advocating for the establishment of an Expert Panel on Coastal Adaptation in February 2026, funded by the CPB as an activity adjacent to CRC. The Panel is designed to act as an assurance function tasked with providing independent review, objective and consistent advice on coastal hazard planning, ensuring CHAPs are consistent

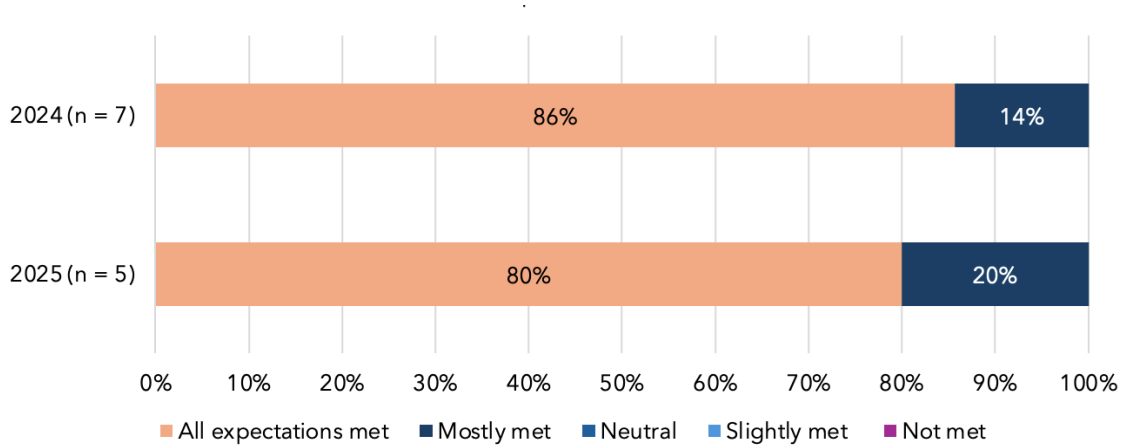
[10] Department for Environment and Water. (n.d.). SA Climate Ready Coasts Data Workstream: Coastal Data Investment Overview. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/1923406/Coastal-data-investment-fact-sheet.pdf

with the minimum standards of the CHAP Guidelines, and provide councils with pragmatic and constructive advice.

A consistent theme through consultations with the ESC and PMG was the need for an ongoing 'coordinator' role. Such a role was reported as vital for the ongoing progression and sustainability of the program, recognising the program's complexity of multiple partners across jurisdictions, multiple subprojects and subcontracts, and the variety of stakeholder engagement. The evaluation found that **successful program coordination and delivery was largely attributable to the recruitment of the "right" program manager** who held individual capabilities across technical, strategic and communications domains. The Program Manager successfully maintained governance and reporting processes, connected operational work with strategic oversight, managed risk, engaged councils and key stakeholders, and coordinated multiple partners and subprojects. This view was strongly communicated during multiple consultations with representatives from the ESC and PMG.

Annual project management surveys conducted by LGA during the term of this program also received positive responses regarding the quality and effectiveness of the project management[11]. The evaluation reviewed the survey results as a secondary data source. Respondents consistently rated core program management functions, such as the timeliness and quality of information, coordination across partners, procurement support, and meeting arrangements, as 'good' to 'excellent', reflecting confidence in both delivery and governance. The surveys also highlight strong satisfaction with how program management expectations have been met, demonstrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Has the Program Management of CRC met you and your agency's expectations?[11]



While adaptive decision making has occurred throughout program delivery, an **opportunity for improvement** exists to establish a lessons learned log. This would support more consistent documentation of challenges, adjustments and effective practices as they emerge. A shared, periodically reviewed record would strengthen organisational knowledge, reduce reliance on individual knowledge holders, and support continuous improvement across CRC future phases.

Aside from the strength and success of the current program management and manager, stakeholders also identified this concentration of knowledge, relationships and coordination capability of one individual as a potential risk to continuity and long-term sustainability.

[11] LGA South Australia. (2024, 2025). *Climate Ready Coasts Program Management Survey* [Microsoft Forms data export].

Recommendation 1: Implement clear succession planning and knowledge-transfer arrangements.

This will reduce reliance on an individual, strengthen continuity of delivery and retain critical institutional knowledge.

Whilst the program initially intended to establish a formal stakeholder reference group, this was repositioned as a CoP with an opt in forum to provide two way communication about the program and encourage stakeholder participation without a mandate for attendance. Initially delivered in webinar format, in August 2025 the CoP was created inclusive of a broad membership of approximately 140 members including representatives from DEW, councils, relevant state agencies and interested parties. Operating typically as a virtual meeting, it served the purpose of information sharing, capacity building, peer to peer learning, and as a communication and engagement forum.

"The program design has been flexible enough that I can engage with it where we are at in the process. The Community of Practice approach really suits this subject matter and the nature of the SA local government network."

Program implementation

The initial Program Plan[1] was supported by the development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Risk Register and budget, alongside individual project plans. In August 2024, an Interim Implementation Model[6] was developed to inform and guide the implementation of CRC and adoption of the CHAP Guidelines from July 2024 to June 2026. This model outlined key, critical actions required, notably the finalisation of CHAP Guidelines, allocation of CRC specific grants, the provision of support in the form of education, training and information sharing that would support the grant process. To support these drivers, enabling activities were outlined and included the consideration of options to strengthen coastal policy framework, ongoing need for program coordination and an advice and assurance function.

The monitoring of progress against project milestones, budget performance and risks was undertaken comprehensively and reported consistently through quarterly ESC meetings. Delays in the delivery of key milestones were identified early and escalated through these governance forums. The evaluation observed that, overall, the adaptation planning stream tracked well against key foundational milestones, with minor delays of awarding the coastal adaptation grants and delivering final capacity-building activities. The data stream experienced more significant delays, largely attributable to changes in DEW personnel and associated capacity constraints. This is explored in more detail later in this report in Chapter 4.

The Stakeholder Engagement plan was established early in the program in March 2023[12] and progressively updated (September 2023 and June 2024) inclusive of the program's objectives, stakeholder mapping, engagement approaches and activities and an action plan, intended as a living document was updated accordingly.

[12] Local Government Association of South Australia. (2023 March). SA Climate Ready Coasts: Stakeholder Engagement Plan, updated September 2024.

Partnerships

Stakeholders consistently identified the **partnership-based delivery model as a defining feature of the CRC program**. Shared ownership across local and state government supported stronger buy-in, improved legitimacy and more consistent outcomes compared to previous, more fragmented approaches. The partnership approach was reported to have strengthened relationships between state and local government, and improved shared understanding of coastal risk and planning needs. Collectively, these strengthened relationships were seen to provide a stronger foundation for coordinated coastal adaptation planning and future implementation.

"Having local and state government in a room together, with leaders and experts, is a positive in itself".

In addition to individual consultations, members of the ESC were asked to complete a survey tool that focussed on 'partnership'. The partnership assessment found a mean score of 141 out of 175, indicating that the CRC partnership was characterised by genuine collaboration, which supported the consultation findings that the partnership model has been a key strength of the program.

The key enablers supporting the partnership identified in the survey were:

- The action is adding value (rather than duplicating services) for the community, clients or agencies involved in the partnership.
- There is a clear need for and commitment to continuing the collaboration in the medium term.

Opportunities to further develop the partnership include:

- Reflecting on and addressing the differences in organisational priorities, goals and tasks.
- Establishing processes for recognising, celebrating and communicating collective achievements and/or individual contributions.

Summary of key findings

Overall, the evaluation found that the CRC program was **well designed and effectively implemented, with a staged, dual-workstream model that was appropriate to achieving its intended outcomes.**

Key strengths included the deliberate partnership-based design across local, state and Australian Government, clear governance arrangements through the ESC and PMG, and the concurrent focus on both data and adaptation planning activities. The program demonstrated a high degree of adaptability, with governance processes enabling timely refinements to scope, sequencing, terminology and deliverables in response to emerging needs, stakeholder feedback and evidence. Stakeholders consistently identified the quality of program coordination and project management as an enabler of success.

Areas for improvement relate primarily to implementation risks rather than design improvements, including reducing reliance on a single program management role, delays in delivery timelines across the data workstream due to external capacity constraints, the need for clearer post funding continuity arrangements.

4. Program outcomes and impact

This chapter presents the evaluation's findings in respect to the program 'Effectiveness and Impact' evaluation domain.

Program activities

The CRC program has largely delivered the full suite of its **planned activities**. All Stage 1 foundational activities have been completed, with activities across Stages 2 and 3 either completed or progressing with some delays experienced, though these did not materially affect progress toward program outcomes. In addition to the planned program of work, the CRC program delivered a number of value-adding and adaptive activities that were not fully defined at commencement (see Chapter 3). Table 5 provides a summary assessment of all key CRC activities, followed by a detailed assessment in Table 6.

Table 5: Summary of activity completion

Stage	Total #	Completed	Partially completed	In progress
Stage 1: Foundation	**8**	8	-	-
Stage 2: Accelerate Adaptation Planning	**4**	2	-	2
Stage 3: Embedding[13]	**3**	1	-	2
TOTAL		**11**	**-**	**4**

Table 6: Assessment of key program outputs

Activity/Outputs	Assessment summary
Stage 1: Foundation	
Program formation & establishment of governance structures/processes.	**Completed.** ESC and PMG established at commencement of program, Terms of Reference endorsed early and respective groups meet regularly.
Initial stakeholder engagement including delivery of stakeholder engagement reports, and coastal adaptation maturity assessments for each council.	**Completed.** The first stage of engagement for the CHAP Guidelines was completed with extensive stakeholder engagement. Two stakeholder engagement reports were delivered. The **completed** maturity assessment provides a consistent snapshot assessment of coastal hazard adaptation planning maturity across all 34 coastal councils and is being used to tailor support from the CRC program to councils as they progress their CHAP project.

[13] NB: Four activities were originally included in the stage three delivery, with the Future Directions Paper removed.

Activity/Outputs	Assessment summary
Benchmarking report to inform SA Coastal Adaptation Standards.	**Completed.** The Benchmarking Review delivered by HATCH was effective in building the evidence to inform CHAP Guideline design. This review systematically examined national and international coastal adaptation planning frameworks to identify best practice in governance, engagement, risk assessment and implementation.
Coastal Data Stocktake Report.	**Completed.** The Coastal Data Stocktake, delivered by Edge Impact, identified and assessed national, state and local coastal datasets to understand how data is currently collected, used and shared to support coastal hazard adaptation in South Australia.
Approved CHAP Guidelines, Compendiums and support resources.	**Completed and in early use.** The CHAP Guidelines were developed as the central technical and delivery framework for the CRC program, informed by the foundational engagement and research activities above, and refined through an independent peer-review process.
Acquire and deploy new monitoring infrastructure. Development of prototype coastal adaptation prioritisation framework.	**Completed.** New wave rider buoys and tide gauges were deployed in priority sites across South Australia to strengthen the quality, coverage and accessibility of coastal monitoring data. The infrastructure provides local, real-time wave and water-level information that improves hazard modelling, risk assessment and confidence in adaptation planning decisions. **Completed.** Review and implementation of coastal adaptation prioritisation framework is a deliverable of CRC 2.0.
Revised Interim Implementation Model.	**Completed.**
Stage 2: Accelerate adaptation planning	
Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grants	**In progress.** The Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grants provided targeted funding to 15 projects across 13 councils to accelerate CHAP preparation, review and early implementation.
Coastal adaptation capacity building activities.	**Completed.** Activities include, CHAP guideline design and engagement, council maturity assessments, stakeholder webinars, coastal resilience short course, CoP forum, grants and support for grantees.
Complete Statewide Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment.	**Completed.** The Statewide Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment addressed a critical evidence gap by delivering the first consistent, statewide mapping of potential coastal erosion extents across South Australia. The associated communications plan was delayed and will be delivered by June 2026.
Address priority data gaps through additional data requirements	**In progress.** The final data acquisition has been informed by a prioritisation framework using existing data to identify high risk coastal hazard areas. Cross-referenced with the earlier council

Activity/Outputs	Assessment summary
	maturity assessment, the framework determined priority locations for further data acquisition that will provide the most immediate value.
Stage 3: Embedding	
Independent program evaluation.	**This document.**
Learning informed update of tools and resources.	**In progress.**
Evaluate and improve access to coastal datasets and portals.	**In progress.**

The evaluation's findings in respect to each of the four **outcome areas** are presented below.

Coordinated and consistent approaches to coastal hazard adaptation

Overall, the evaluation found that the CRC program has made **significant progress in establishing the foundations for more consistent coastal hazard adaptation planning**, achieved through the successful delivery of planned activities. A key achievement has been the development of clearly articulated principles, minimum standards and methodologies through the CHAP Guidelines and associated resources. During the consultations stakeholders consistently described these as a tangible and valuable output that has provided, for the first time, an adopted local and state reference point for coastal adaptation planning. Compared to previous approaches, which were described as fragmented and highly localised, the CRC program has contributed to a shift towards more consistent, evidence-based methods aligned with national practice.

The CRC program has also established the **foundations for coordinated and improved coastal datasets**, through systematic stocktaking, targeted data acquisition and coastal monitoring infrastructure investment, supporting both planning and real time coastal management. However, the benefits of these improvements are still emerging and are dependent on improved accessibility, communication and integration into planning and operational practice.

Stakeholder engagement

A key foundational activity of the CRC program, *initial stakeholder consultation*, aimed to introduce the program to coastal councils and through their input, refine its scope and objectives[14].

A comprehensive engagement strategy was deployed across a range of formats (Table 7). This process informed three key, influential documents: the Engagement Summary Report[9], the Maturity Assessment[15] and associated database, and the SA Climate Ready Coasts Consultation Report[14]. Information contained in these documents translated practitioner experience and feedback into refinements to guidelines, compendiums and tools, and informed program sequencing, including

[14] LGA SA. (2024 October). SA Climate Ready Coasts Consultation Report. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/1706035/Consultation-Report-CRC-Stakeholder-Consultation-2024.pdf

[15] Hatch. (2024 September). Climate Ready Coasts – Foundations Project Maturity Assessment Technical Memo.

the development of the Interim Implementation model (a new milestone deliverable that responded to findings from stakeholder engagement).

Table 7: Stage 1 Stakeholder Engagement[9,14]

Engagement Strategy	Impact
Webpage	• 599 page views, 199 document downloads
Media Releases and News items	• 9 total
Consultation launch webinar	• 52 attendees
Regional Workshops	• 60 staff (30 coastal councils)
Government Agency Stakeholder Meetings	• 59 Staff (11 State government agencies)
Individual Council Representative Consultations	• 21 participants
Written feedback/submissions	• 10 written submissions, 3 online feedback forms

With specific reference to the maturity assessment, this provided a point-in-time assessment of coastal hazard adaptation planning maturity across all 34 coastal councils, measured against the minimum standards in the draft CHAP Guidelines. This, in turn created a baseline measure to both inform targeted resourcing and enable measurement of change over time, and application impact of the guidelines. Stakeholders frequently highlighted that **council readiness, understanding and resourcing remains significantly varied across the state**, as these conditions continue to evolve, maintaining an up-to-date understanding of council maturity is critical to support the prioritisation of adaptation effort in the next phase of the program (2026-2029) and should be continued post-2029 funding.

Recommendation 2: Continue to maintain the maturity database, with regular updating of councils' maturity assessment on a set cycle (e.g., annually or at key milestones).

Ongoing maintenance will support the evidence-base to remain current and comparable, enabling better targeting of support, progress tracking, prioritising of investment, and provide a consistent, longitudinal dataset to support future program evaluation.

Benchmarking Review

As part of Stage 1, CRC undertook a *Benchmarking Review*[8]. It provided an evidence-base that informed the structure, minimum standards and supporting compendiums of the CHAP Guidelines, balancing consistency with flexibility for place-based application. There is an **ongoing opportunity to strengthen learning by sharing insights and experiences** with state counterparts on implementation pathways, funding approaches and transitions from planning to action. Leveraging these shared learnings can help inform program refinement and maintain alignment with emerging practice.

Recommendation 3: Establish a structured learning and continuous improvement approach, including a formal lessons learned log and ongoing engagement with state, national and international coastal adaptation networks.

This will ensure program tools, guidance and approaches remain relevant and aligned with emerging coastal adaptation practice.

Coastal data stocktake

A comprehensive *data stocktake* was undertaken by Edge Impact as a foundational activity[16]. It highlighted significant fragmentation, limited data sharing and capability gaps across councils, while also identifying high-value datasets and internal DEW resources that were underutilised. The activity **established a strong evidence-base to inform data standards, governance and future investment decisions within the CRC program**. Its ongoing value lies in translating the report recommendations into coordinated data access, guidance and capacity-building initiatives.

Coastal monitoring infrastructure

As part of foundational data work, the program acquired and deployed *new coastal monitoring infrastructure*[17]. The initial program plan outlined the output of 12 new wave rider buoys, however after initial engagement with coastal monitoring partners Flinders University and Integrated Marine Observing System's (IMOS) sub-facility SARDI, a broader infrastructure approach was determined to be more fit for purpose. IMOS have deployed four wave buoy sites across the state and DEW have added two new sites to the IMOS network through the CRC program. Additional funding from CPB enabled the program to expand the State's tide data network, with three new tide gauges installed. **The change of original scope of this project reflects CRC flexibility and responsiveness to need,** with the broader monitoring infrastructure contributing to a more diverse network applicable to a greater range of stakeholders.

CHAP Guidelines

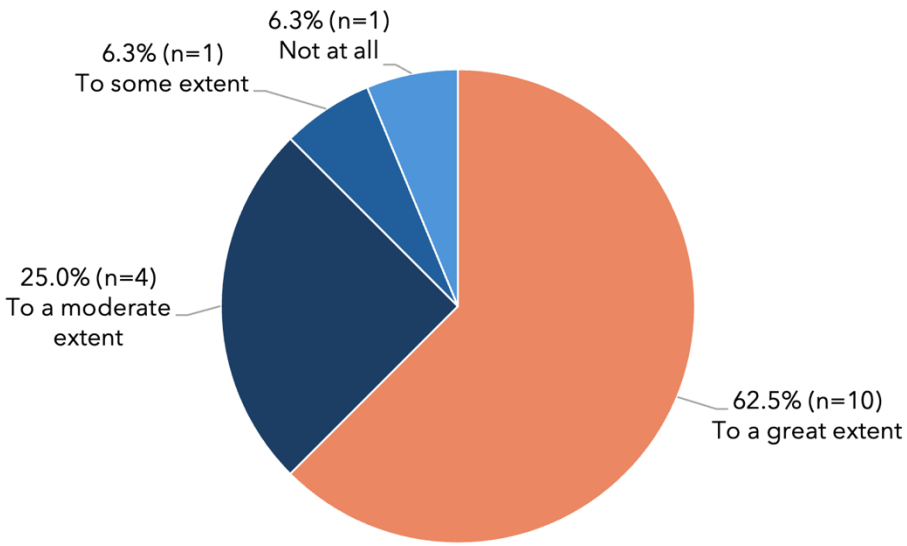
The *CHAP Guidelines*, *associated compendiums and tools* were developed as the central technical and delivery framework for the CRC program. The Guidelines, adopted in late 2024, provide South Australia with its **first comprehensive, jointly adopted state and local government standard for coastal hazard adaptation planning.** The evaluation found the Guidelines improved alignment, achieving a shared language, methodology and set of expectations across councils, state agencies and consultants, supporting more defensible decision-making and improved alignment of planning, investment and implementation.

The CoP survey found that CRC has established the foundations for more consistent coastal adaptation approaches with 87.5% (n=14) of respondents agreeing to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent (Figure 5). This is supported by the qualitative evaluation findings which identified the **CHAP Guidelines as a key program achievement contributing to increased coordinated and consistent approaches.**

[16] Edge Impact. (2024). Coastal Data Stocktake: SA Climate Ready Coasts.

[17] Department for Environment and Water. (n.d.). Coastal Monitoring Infrastructure Network: Factsheet. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0041/1666994/DEW-Factsheet-Coastal-Monitoring-Infrastructure-August-2024.pdf

Figure 5: CRC has established the foundations for more consistent coastal adaptation approaches (n=16)



Feedback from the CoP survey and Coastal Resilience Short Course (discussed further below) indicated that some participants would value more focussed, hands-on guidance on applying the CHAP Guidelines and technical compendiums, accessing and interpreting available datasets, and specifying and better understanding consultant outputs. This feedback highlights an opportunity for the program to provide follow-on, skills-based training on CHAP application.

Recommendation 4: Provide stakeholders with targeted, skills-based training focussed on the practical application of the CHAP Guidelines and associated resources and data, this could be delivered through existing mechanisms such as the CoP forum.

This would strengthen practitioner confidence in applying the Guidelines and working with external consultants.

Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grants

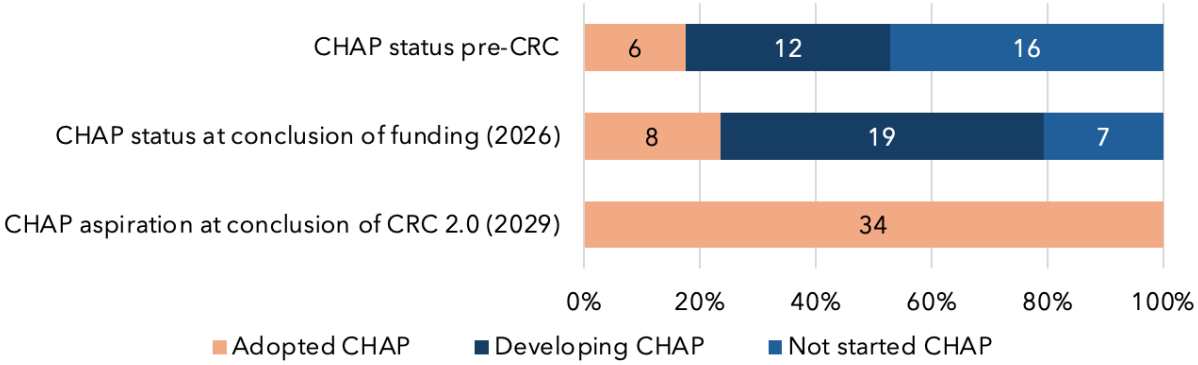
The adoption and application of the Guidelines have been, and continue to be, actively facilitated through the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grants process. The grants provide targeted funding to councils to accelerate CHAP preparation, review or early implementation. The requirement for co-contributions and collaborative applications leveraged significant additional investment and strengthened cross-council partnerships in the first grant round. To date more than $1.45M has been awarded to 13 councils across 14 projects, with councils co-contributing a total of $1,052,176 across projects **(Appendix F)**[18]. Councils have engaged external consultants through these grants to commence the process for developing or progressing their respective CHAPs.

The primary value of the grants is in enabling councils to understand coastal hazard exposure and risk, explore adaptation options, and develop clear, prioritised implementation plans for action. In doing this, the grants contribute to council capability uplift, accelerating CHAP Guideline uptake and reinforcing consistency across the sector. CRC has built strong momentum in coordinating more consistent approaches to coastal adaptation through the development and early grantee use of the

[18] LGA SA. (2025). Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grant recipients 2025. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0040/1814998/Coastal-Hazard-Adaptation-Grant-recipients-2025.pdf

CHAP Guidelines. However, councils remain at different stages of the planning and implementation cycle, and supporting CHAP development and adoption remains a core focus for CRC 2.0, as illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Council status of CHAP pre and post CRC (n=34 coastal councils)



Statement of limitation: The evaluators were instructed not to consult with grant recipients or their consultants on Guideline usability due to the early stage of implementation. Accordingly, assessment of practical use and effectiveness is limited. In this context, maintaining stability in the CHAP Guidelines during implementation will be important in the next phase, **with a suggested planned review cycle informed by use in practice as implementation progresses.**

However, the consultations and CoP qualitative feedback highlighted the **grant funding as a critical enabler** for program participation and adaptation acceleration, alongside the capacity support provided by CRC program partners to grantees. The ESC and PMG suggested encouraging early signals including, multi-council applications, particularly for regional areas where councils may share similar coastal issues but have limited resources, and efforts to coordinate CRC grants with the CPB grants to avoid duplication and clarify purpose for consistent coastal adaptation.

The evaluation found that some council grantees experienced procurement delays in progressing their CHAP projects, with feedback indicating that project scoping and development of Request for Quotation (RFQ) for consultants in this field was technically complex.

Recommendation 5: CRC program partners provide councils with both targeted project scoping support and a standard RFQ template for CHAP projects in CRC 2.0.

Together, this recommendation would streamline procurement processes, support consistency in consultancy briefs, and reduce delays particularly for councils with lower planning maturity or limited procurement capacity.

Improved understanding of coastal risk

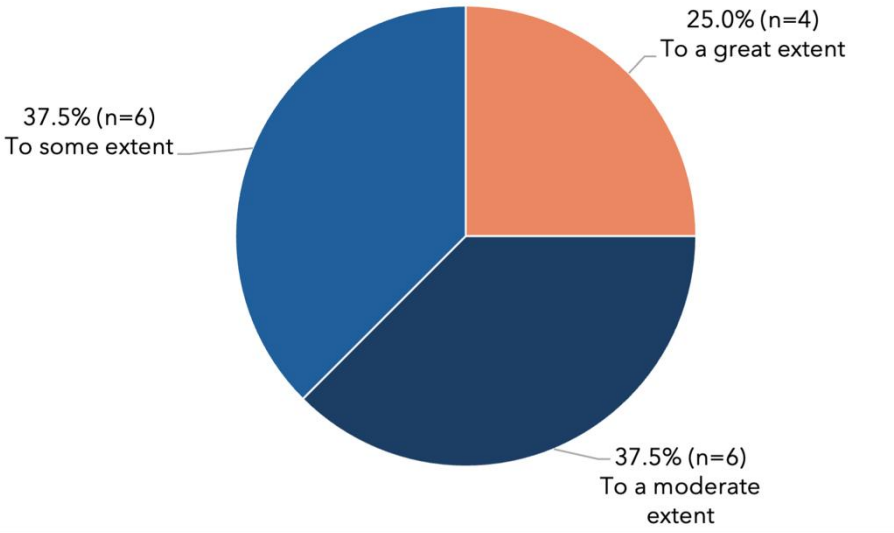
The evaluation found that the CRC program has **contributed to improvements in awareness and understanding of coastal risk**, particularly among practitioners and engaged stakeholders, although the level and consistency of understanding vary across councils. Stakeholders consistently reported that CRC activities have strengthened baseline literacy about coastal hazards and that a common language and vernacular is now shared by stakeholders across the sector which has facilitated increased understanding and knowledge sharing.

Capacity building activities were cited as important support mechanisms for improving risk literacy, discussed further in the next section. Workshops, the CoP, CHAP-related engagement, and

one-on-one support through grants helped practitioners contextualise hazard information within their local settings. However, **levels of understanding remain uneven**, with smaller and less resourced councils experiencing limited diffusion of knowledge beyond environment or coastal officers into broader organisational understanding. As a result, while awareness of coastal risk has increased sector wide, the ability to consistently translate hazard information into shared organisational understanding is still emerging.

Respondents to the CoP survey reported increased understanding of coastal risk, with 62.5% respondents agreeing to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent (Figure 7). Supplementary responses from those who responded, 'to some extent' (37.5%) indicated that this result largely reflects participants' preexisting expertise in coastal hazards or their recent entry into the program, rather than limitations in the CRC activities themselves.

Figure 7. My understanding of coastal hazards and coastal risk has increased since CRC began (n=16)



Statewide Coastal Hazard Erosion Assessment

A key mechanism supporting the improved understanding of coastal risk was the delivery of a *Statewide Coastal Hazard Erosion Assessment and mapping*[19]. The assessment and mapping provide an important dataset to inform CHAPs, monitoring priorities and strategic planning decisions. By improving the consistency and comparability of erosion risk data and information, the assessment is a key source to inform understanding coastal risk, supports alignment between local and state-level planning and can enhance the credibility of future adaptation decisions. **Stakeholders highlighted the value of having a consistent, state-wide picture of erosion risk**, which enables a shift in conversations from whether risk exists to how it should be interpreted and managed.

The hazard assessment, mapping and associated communications plan were delayed due to capacity constraints associated with personnel changes and organisation restructure within DEW. Scheduled for completion in September 2025, the technical assessment and mapping components were completed with minor delays in October 2025, with a more significant communications plan delay with delivery intended by June 2026. Due to these delays, the evaluation cannot assess the access and useability components of the statewide coastal erosion hazard assessment in contributing to an

[19] Department for Environment and Water. (n.d.). Statewide Coastal Erosion Hazard Assessment: Factsheet. https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0039/1666992/Statewide-coastal-erosion-hazard-assessment-fact-sheet.pdf

increased understanding of coastal risk. Stakeholders identified the need to operationalise data in council usable formats, clarify intended access permissions, and establish clear arrangements for data storage, maintenance and ongoing collection to ensure data remains fit for purpose over time.

Recommendation 6: DEW to strengthen data communication and capacity-building for intended users of the coastal hazard datasets.

The recommended action will build practitioner and decision-maker confidence, support more consistent and appropriate application of coastal risk information and strengthen the practical value of the assessment.

Priority data acquisition

The priority data acquisition project was rescoped multiple times, shifting from an original focus on bathymetric data collection to a more strategic approach through the development of a prioritisation framework to identify high-risk coastal hazard areas. The earlier council maturity assessment was utilised in conjunction with the prioritisation framework to determine priority locations where additional data will provide the most immediate value. Originally scheduled for completion in December 2025 by DEW, LGA has provided an extension of delivery for completion in June 2026. Due to these delays, the evaluation cannot assess the completed project.

Increased capacity and knowledge of coastal hazard adaptation planning

The evaluation found that the CRC program has made a substantial contribution to **building capacity and knowledge** of coastal hazard adaptation planning, particularly among practitioners directly engaged in CRC activities.

Capacity building was delivered as a cross cutting and embedded feature of the CRC program, rather than as a standalone project. Activities were implemented through a combination of structured formats and ongoing, hands-on support by the CRC Program Manager and staff from DEW's Coast Unit.

Activities that contributed to capacity building included:

- CHAP Guideline co-design, consultation and council maturity assessments.
- Stakeholder webinars.
- CoP online forum.
- Coastal Adaptation Grants. The grant EOI and formal application process (including feedback and support provided by CRC partners to grant applications) and ongoing support for grantees by DEW technical expertise and the CRC Program Manager.
- Griffith University Coastal Resilience Short Course, delivered in 2025 to four participants, and after high interest, delivered more widely to thirty local and state government employees in 2026.
- Expert Panel on Coastal Adaptation. While it is too early in the panel's development to determine effectiveness at the time of evaluation, the panel aims to support council capacity building through provision of constructive advice on coastal hazard adaptation plans.

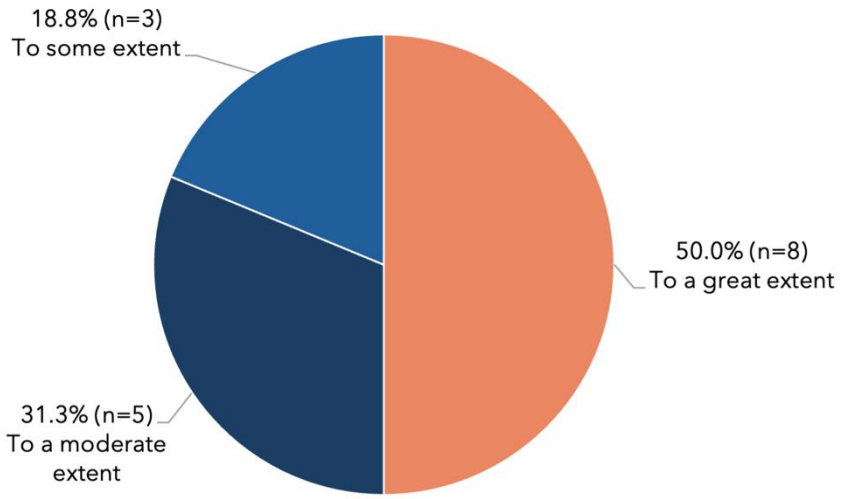
A defining strength of the CRC approach was its combination of written guidance with active learning and support mechanisms. Stakeholders noted that guidelines alone would not have been sufficient to build confidence; rather, **capacity improvements were driven by engagement through**

workshops, maturity assessments, the CoP forum, peer learning exchange and support embedded in grant funded projects.

The process of developing CHAPs was itself widely described as a capacity-building exercise, with councils learning through the consultation process, then by delivery of CRC-funded grant projects, progressively strengthening their understanding of planning stages, methodologies and decision pathways. For councils with limited prior experience in this area, CRC provided a structured entry point into adaptation planning that would otherwise have been difficult to resource or initiate.

The CoP survey responses indicate that CRC-related training opportunities have been delivered efficiently and in an accessible manner. Overall, 81.3% of respondents reported that training was delivered efficiently and accessibly to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent, with a further 18.8% indicating this occurred to some extent (Figure 8). The results suggest broad satisfaction with the accessibility and delivery of CRC capacity-building activities, supporting stakeholder feedback that CRC's blended approach to guidelines, grants, training and hands-on support has been effective.

Figure 8: CRC related training opportunities have been delivered efficiently and made accessible to me (n=16)



Community of Practice (CoP)

The CoP forum was established to provide an informal, practitioner focussed mechanism that builds capability and accelerates consistent coastal hazard adaptation planning by enabling peer learning, information sharing and practical problem solving across councils and state agencies. A feedback survey was sent by the CRC Program Manager to attendees of the inaugural CoP online meeting, participants rated the session 4.55 of a total score of 5 (n=15).

"The real value I find is the networking and sharing of projects and information across stakeholders which increases shared knowledge and willingness to work together across boundaries to deliver projects".

The evaluation consultations and CoP survey found **collaboration and networking to be a key achievement of the program**, with the CoP highlighted as a successful forum that strengthened relationships, facilitated peer learning and provided tailored topics of interest to stakeholders.

Coastal Resilience Short Course

The CRC program supported four council officers to attend Griffith University's Coastal Resilience Short Course in 2025. Following positive feedback and strong interest from additional stakeholders,

CRC subsequently coordinated delivery of the course in South Australia in April 2026. CRC subsidised the three-day course for thirty South Australian local and state government employees, which included presentations from local and national speakers, interactive workshops, and field trips.

A post-course survey administered by LGA indicated the **course was highly effective in building participants' understanding and confidence in coastal management and adaptation**, achieving an average quality rating of 4.3 out of 5 (n=13) (Question: Overall, how would you rate the quality of the course in building your understanding and confidence around coastal management and adaptation).

"My highlight of the course was the field trip which provided the opportunity to hear from people who've worked on real-word projects to help reinforce the theory."

The evaluation analysed the qualitative survey responses and found participants consistently valued the expertise of presenters and the practical grounding of content. **Opportunities for improvement** focussed on increasing the training of hands-on application of the CHAP Guidelines, refining content balance toward South Australian and local government contexts and adjusting course pacing to allow more interactive discussion and reducing theory heavy presentations. Overall, the feedback confirms the course as a high-value capacity-building initiative, with clear opportunities to further strengthen its impact through targeted refinements if delivered again.

While there has been demonstratable improvement in capacity as a result of the CRC program's efforts, **capacity and knowledge improvements remain uneven across councils.** This evaluation consultations and CoP survey found that councils vary significantly in their baseline readiness, staffing levels and ability to dedicate time to adaptation planning. In many cases, knowledge and capability remain concentrated in individual officers or small coastal or environmental teams, limiting organisation-wide ownership. Councils continue to rely heavily on consultants to undertake technical work, which has enabled progress in the short-term but presents risks for long-term capability retention.

"Our council will never be in the position for staff to personally use the tools, guidelines and to a lesser extent, the data. We rely on consultants with that expertise".

Recommendation 7: CRC 2.0 to support councils to build organisation-wide engagement and buy-in for coastal adaptation through tailored guidance and educational resources.

This includes equipping councils to engage their planners, asset managers, finance staff, executive leadership, and elected members through the CHAP process.

Create evidence-based decisions and investments in the coast

The evaluation found that the CRC program has **begun to influence more evidence-based approaches to decision-making, although observable changes in investment decisions are only beginning to emerge**. Stakeholders were consistent in noting that CRC has primarily laid the groundwork for better decisions, rather than directly driving large scale investment outcomes at this stage. For example: the prioritisation framework, developed in the foundations stage, was established to support more transparent and consistent decision-making by identifying and ranking adaptation actions. While the framework is a strong tool to support evidence-based investment, it has not yet been fully operationalised, and its application in CRC 2.0 as CHAPs are completed will be key to translating plans into prioritised action. Given the program's timing and focus on developing foundations, establishing the Guidelines, improving coastal adaptation data and building capacity, this finding is broadly expected at this stage of the program.

CRC's most immediate impact has been improving the quality and process of planning decisions. The introduction of agreed principles, methodologies and standards through the adopted CHAP Guidelines have helped councils and agencies clarify which evidence should be used, how risks should be assessed, and how options should be prioritised.

Together, the data stream initiatives have strengthened the availability of coastal hazard data, although the full benefits of this investment will depend on continued efforts to improve awareness among intended users, enhance accessibility and build capacity to interpret and apply the data effectively. The data activities have increased coastal data availability and provide a foundation for prioritising future data acquisition, refining local-scale studies and aligning monitoring investments with areas of highest uncertainty or risk.

There are also early signals of more coordinated and strategic investment behaviour by state and local governments. Examples include deliberate alignment between CRC grants and CPB grant funding to reduce duplication and clarify purpose, and the use of CRC foundational data projects to identify hotspots for priority data acquisition. However, stakeholders consistently noted that implementation funding constraints, long planning horizons, and unresolved policy and governance issues limit the extent to which evidence-based plans can yet translate into on-ground investment.

"Updated coastal hazard mapping, erosion modelling, inundation assessments, and asset condition data has provided us the evidence-base needed to make informed decisions. Reliable data reduces uncertainty and allows us to confidently contribute to planning discussions."

Summary of key findings

The evaluation found that CRC has delivered positive early impacts across all four **intended outcomes** by improving coordination of coastal adaptation approaches, strengthening understanding of coastal risk, building sector capability, and supporting more evidence-based planning and decision-making. While implementation impacts are still emerging and vary across councils due to differing levels of readiness and resourcing, CRC has established strong foundations through adopted Guidelines, data, partnerships and capacity-building that position the sector for more consistent and effective coastal adaptation as the program progresses.

5. Efficiency and sustainability

This chapter presents the evaluation's findings in respect to the program 'Efficiency and Sustainability' evaluation domains.

Efficiency

The total value of funding supporting the CRC program was $6,587,600, comprising $3,707,000 in Commonwealth funding, a further $2,098,300 in State government funding, and $782,300 in other funding and contributions. A substantial proportion of the State and other partner contribution was provided in-kind. Progress reporting demonstrated the program has tracked on budget.

As the program reaches the end of its three year term, the **evaluation concludes that it has realised the majority of its planned outputs.** Projects that remain in progress include the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Grants, additional value add capacity projects (pilot videos), finalisation of the additional priority data acquisition and delivery of the data communications plan. There is still work required in relation to datasets including:

- Establishing permission level access parameters
- Consideration of a combined data portal for coastal data sharing.

CRC's delivery model is structured to maximise efficiency through partnership delivery and leveraging external capability including:

- Delivery via consultants
- Targeted grant funding to councils
- In-kind support from LGA, DEW and partner organisations.

The program has also deliberately leveraged co-funding, national and state collaborations to extend infrastructure outcomes. An example of this was the data workstream's monitoring program which was coordinated with IMOS/SARDI resulting in their commitment to deploy and maintain wave buoy sites, as well as co-funded expansion of tide gauge capability. The use of council grant projects with required co-contributions and encouragement of multi-council collaborations also support efficient resource deployment by pooling effort and reducing duplication across councils.

In addition to its initial funding contribution, the CPB provided further targeted investments throughout the program, including top-up funding to expand coastal monitoring infrastructure, co-funding of the Coastal Resilience Short Course, and funding for the establishment of the Expert Panel on Coastal Adaptation. Beyond the financial contribution, this reflects CPB's responsiveness to emerging opportunities and its commitment to maximising the overall value and impact of the CRC program.

Sustainability

The findings and recommendations presented in this section highlight where CRC is well positioned for long-term sustainability, as well as where additional action will be required to embed benefits beyond the current funding period.

The operating context for CRC is strengthened by the clear, ongoing need for coordinated coastal adaptation in South Australia and sector recognition of increasing coastal risk. Consultation findings indicate broad sector support for CRC's role in improving consistency, capability and evidence-based planning. However, maintaining momentum will require continued policy and

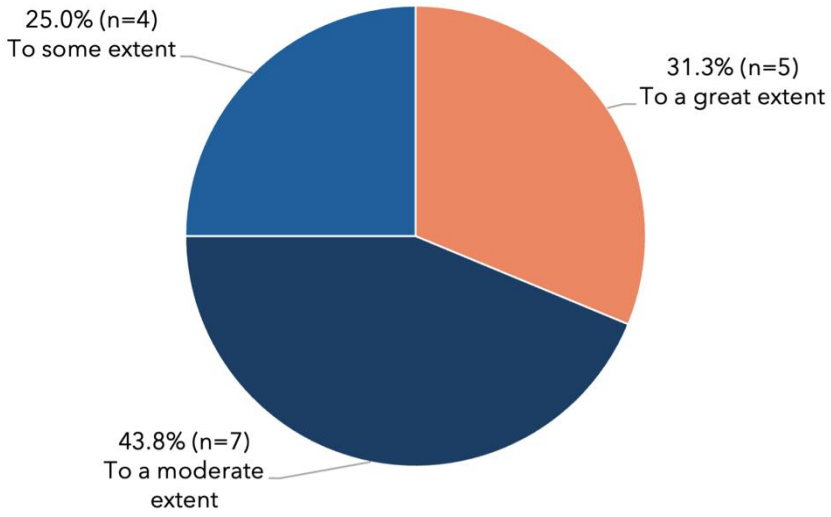
institutional attention, particularly as coastal adaptation competes with other government priorities. Sustaining environmental support beyond CRC funding will depend on continued alignment with state-level policy directions and integration with broader climate and coastal governance frameworks. While the CRC program has successfully established effective coordination, assurance and capability building functions through the partnership-based delivery model, these functions are currently largely program dependent and are at risk of not being sustained beyond CRC 2.0.

Recommendation 8: CRC partners explore long-term pathways to progressively anchor key coordination and assurance functions within state government coastal governance arrangements, while maintaining the collaborative partnership with local government.

This will support long-term continuity, institutional ownership and policy influence beyond the life of program funding.

CRC **funding sustainability** is strengthened by the program's focus on **strategic assets** designed to endure beyond the initial funding period, namely the shared CHAP Guidelines, council maturity assessments, improved coastal datasets and monitoring infrastructure, prioritisation framework, commitment to the Expert Panel on Coastal Adaptation for a three-year term, and capability uplift mechanisms (networks and ongoing learning). Survey responses from the CoP show that 75% of participants believe CRC tools, datasets and guidance will remain useful and sustainable beyond the life of the program to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent (Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: CRC tools, datasets and guidance will remain useful and sustainable beyond the life of the program (n=16)



Importantly, CRC has secured additional funding through the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund that extends the program through to 2029, improving continuity and the likelihood that tools, datasets and support mechanisms can be embedded and refined over time rather than remaining "one-off" products. However, the evaluation consultation and survey findings identified that long-term sustainability depends on the program's ability to maintain and update core products (e.g., Guidelines, datasets, monitoring networks) and to sustain coordination and assurance functions as CRC moves to a new phase from foundation to implementation.

"New data and information will always need to be considered and incorporated on an ongoing basis to maintain relevance and confidence".

The long-term sustainability of the program is constrained by limited funding pathways for implementation. Even with additional Disaster Ready Fund funding for CRC 2.0, the cost of implementing CHAP recommendations, particularly infrastructure and large scale adaptation actions, is not in scope for this funding which presents a significant gap in progressing from adaptation planning to action.

Recommendation 9: CRC partners undertake a sustainability planning process to collaboratively identify and advocate for future funding models that support the implementation of CHAP recommendations, not just planning activities.

This will help ensure that evidence-based plans translate into on-ground adaptation outcomes, improve the return on investment from planning activity, and increase the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the CRC program.

"Barriers include costs and expertise. It's more in the recommendations, small councils do not have realistic budgets to be dealing with the magnitude of the problems identified (in CHAPs)."

Without a formal requirement embedded in policy, funding or regulatory frameworks, there is a risk that CHAP uptake and application will plateau or regress once time-limited CRC funding concludes. However, consultation findings cautioned against imposing expectations or conditions on councils without commitment of sustained financial and technical support to deliver mandated works. Program partners have identified the importance of supporting the continuity and ongoing application of CHAPs, this includes both supporting councils to maintain and update their CHAPs over time and continued use of the CHAP Guidelines as standard practice.

Recommendation 10: CRC partners explore mechanisms that will encourage continued uptake, maintenance of CHAPs and use of the Guidelines beyond time-limited program funding.

This will help maintain momentum and embed CHAP practice into longer term decision-making frameworks.

Summary of key findings

Overall, the evaluation finds that the CRC program has been delivered efficiently, remaining on budget while largely achieving its planned outputs, and delivering a number of value-adding outputs in response to emerging opportunities. This has been supported by the partnership-based delivery model that leverages co-funding, in-kind contributions and cross-government collaboration to maximise value.

In terms of sustainability, CRC is well positioned due to strong sector support, enduring strategic assets such as shared guidelines, improved datasets and monitoring infrastructure, and confirmed extension of Commonwealth funding through to 2029. However, the long-term success of the program will depend on ongoing policy support, effective data governance and maintenance arrangements, and sustained coordination and resourcing to ensure tools, datasets and CHAP guidance remain current, accessible and actively applied beyond the original funding period.

6. Conclusions

This chapter presents the summary of findings of the evaluation.

Summary of findings

The evaluation found that the CRC program was well designed and effectively delivered, with governance and delivery arrangements well suited to its objectives. The staged program structure, dual focus on data and adaptation planning, and the ESC and PMG governance enabled coordinated delivery and adaptive implementation. This approach was particularly effective in enabling cross-government coordination, responsiveness to emerging needs, and consistent progression across interrelated projects.

The CRC program has made strong progress in establishing the foundations for more consistent coastal hazard adaptation across South Australia, most notably through the development and joint adoption of the CHAP Guidelines. The Guidelines represent a significant step change from previous fragmented approaches by providing a shared framework, minimum standards and adaptation language for councils and state agencies. They have improved the consistency, credibility and defensibility of coastal adaptation planning and decision-making. Strategic investments in data, monitoring infrastructure and the erosion hazard assessment have further strengthened the evidence-base for coastal adaptation, however realising the full value of these data stream initiatives will depend on ongoing accessibility, governance and practical application within planning, operational and investment processes.

Capacity building activities, including grants, training and the CoP, have increased practitioner capability, confidence and collaboration, particularly among those directly engaged in CRC activities. However, council readiness, organisational maturity and resourcing remain uneven, with capacity often concentrated in individual roles or teams, limiting broader organisational embedding of adaptation practice.

The program was delivered efficiently, leveraging a partnership-based model to maximise value through co-funding, shared expertise and in-kind contributions. The securing of additional funding under CRC 2.0 supports continuity and provides an opportunity to shift from foundations to implementation support. Longer-term sustainability, however, will depend on embedding coordination, assurance and data maintenance functions within more enduring policy, governance and funding arrangements to ensure that the foundations established translate into sustained and consistent coastal resilience outcomes over time.