

## **Eurobodalla Shire Council Public Access Forum – 9 June 2026**

### **Surfside Beach**

I am Jason Ford and I will speak about the natural disaster affecting Surfside Beach.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the presence at this forum of Dr Michael Holland, Member for Bega, who has been a strong advocate in support of the issues I will discuss today. The Surfside community appreciates Dr Holland making time to stand here with us as a visible show of that support.

I also want to thank the community members in the public gallery (and anyone watching online) for their time and support.

The purpose of my presentation today is twofold –

- to announce the establishment of Friends of Surfside Beach Incorporated; and
- to put community views on the public record and ask Councillors and Council officials to resolve to allocate funding in Council's budget for annual sand scraping at Surfside, beginning as soon as practical; and to actively pursue further funding sources from higher levels of government, toward short term and long term erosion mitigation solutions.

### **Friends of Surfside Beach Incorporated**

I will start by formally announcing the establishment of Friends of Surfside Beach, which was incorporated on 17 April 2026. We are not for profit and registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. An application for deductible gift recipient status is pending with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Simply, we are a community advocacy and environmentally focussed group. The purpose is to protect and enhance the coastal environment at Surfside Beach, including its dune systems, wildlife populations, nature reserve and residential foreshore, by supporting effective and sustainable erosion mitigation and prevention solutions, community education and environmental conservation projects.

Our objectives include:

- raising funds for the protection of Surfside Beach and adjacent natural areas from coastal erosion;
- supporting and advocating for evidence-based, environmentally responsible erosion control and dune restoration solutions;
- engaging the local community and others;
- preserving the biodiversity and ecological health of the Surfside Beach nature reserve, foreshore and wildlife;
- collaborating with local, state and Federal government and other stakeholders to promote long-term coastline resilience.

I want to emphasise that last point - Friends of Surfside intends to work with Council, government and elected representatives in a constructive and collaborative way. We are not interested in conflict. We are interested in practical solutions and providing a collective community voice and a platform for accurate and up to date information.

The group is seven weeks old and we already have a membership roll well over 100, the vast majority of whom are residents and homeowners of Surfside and neighbouring areas. We are on track to achieve our goal of 200+ members this year. The 2021 Census reports there are 1,456 Surfside residents across 786 private dwellings, so membership numbers are expected to increase further as awareness of the group spreads.

An extract of the Friends of Surfside Beach constitution, showing the detail of our objectives, is attached and I understand it will be published with my written submission, to Council's website. For more information about the group including how to become a member, info about Surfside Beach, FAQs and more, I encourage you to visit our website – at [www.friendsofsurfsidebeach.org.au](http://www.friendsofsurfsidebeach.org.au).

### **Surfside Beach**

I will move on now, to talk on behalf of the broader community about our concerns and what we want to see for the way forward.

The issues facing Surfside Beach have been a topic of concern for many years. There have been numerous representations made by individuals and groups to Council, State and Federal government representatives. The media has reported on the issue from time to time. Sadly, in previous years, there have been more than one well-intended Ministerial funding announcements that have subsequently not unfolded as they were initially described. Possibly that previous sentence reflects the complexities of the situation.

In preparation for this presentation, I asked Google AI to interrogate public records relating to Eurobodalla Shire Council Public Forum and Public Access, to determine the topics most frequently raised in recent years. AI results suggest that residents and community groups have most frequently raised issues regarding environmental protection, climate resilience, urban development and local community facilities. The primary recurring topics involve environmental and climate change concerns, including emergency and resilience planning. Surfside erosion issues have been frequently raised, with community advocates and residents having brought this up at least a dozen times.

I presented to Council at the 16 July 2024 ordinary Council meeting when the agenda included a Mayoral Minute dealing with how \$12 million in Disaster Ready funds were being allocated to coastal protection works across the Eurobodalla (including Surfside West, but not Surfside Beach) - see pages 9 to 13 at [Agenda of Ordinary Meeting - Tuesday, 16 July 2024](#). From that report, a subsequent Mayoral Minute recorded three advocacy and representational related recommendations. See [Ordinary Council - Tuesday, 29 April 2025](#). Two presentations from members of the public at that meeting are at [Public-Forum-16-July-2024.pdf](#).

Since then, the community has been advised by Council that Council has advocated to the NSW Government for funding and action (including in relation to dredging works), although it is not clear to residents and homeowners what Council's advocacy has involved or influenced in relation to longer term planning.

In September 2025, sand scraping was successfully undertaken, providing a meaningful reduction in overtopping and inundation risk. The sacrificial dune created by that work was appreciated by the community, protecting the foreshore environment and residences through several storm and tidal events. Indeed, with Council and Landcare coordination, many community members took pride in planting out the resulting dune and caring for those plantings. Council has stated that its contribution to that 2025 sand scraping was \$15,000, so the return on investment is significant.

Unfortunately, the Surfside Beach environment is now vulnerable again following recent storm events that almost entirely eroded the protective buffer.

The condition of the beach is the worst it has ever been, as represented by recession of the shoreline and as documented by GeoScience Australia (see note 1). The area needs attention and sand scraping has proven to be an effective non-permanent mitigation activity.

- Sand scraping is consistent with Council's *Surfside Beach foreshore reserve plan of management* (see note 2).
- It is an action identified in the Coastal Management Plan for this location.
- A Council report states that success of the Surfside West levee, currently under construction, relies on the Surfside Beach dune being maintained to a defined height (see note 3.1 and 3.2, Worley Consulting report and CMP).
- Council has confirmed that sand scraping is the only management option currently available for protecting the dune from coastal erosion in the short term, so funding it should be a priority.

However, sand scraping alone is not the long-term solution. Rather, it is a practical and cost-effective management measure that buys time while longer-term planning occurs. That longer-term planning needs to start now. Whether the ultimate solution involves ongoing nourishment, a revised Coastal Management Program, engineered protection measures or some combination of approaches, those options will require investigation, consultation, environmental assessment, design development, approvals and funding. All of those processes take time.

### **Reasons to take action**

If planning does not commence until the problem becomes critical, the community and Council will inevitably be responding from a position of urgency rather than preparedness.

There are many reasons for Councillors and Council to listen to the Surfside community and to demonstrate an active effort toward short and long term funding, planning and solutions.

- The issues facing Surfside Beach are preventable and prevention is generally cheaper than emergency response.
- To respond to frequent concerns raised over many years.
- The shoreline recession is real and can be tracked over time at GeoScience Australia's website (see note 1).
- The dune protects not only the natural environment but also homes, roads, services and public assets behind it. Maintaining the dune today is likely to be significantly more effective and economical than waiting until larger and urgent intervention becomes unavoidable.
- For environmental reasons – there are bandicoot and other wildlife populations that rely on the Surfside Beach foreshore to survive.
- Council leadership is needed - Council has advised homeowners that they can undertake their own resilience work on their own property. But that just is not practical or feasible, in the absence of a Council-led and coordinated solution. The dune is one continuous protective system. Individual development applications would be complex, costly and require detailed environmental and engineering assessments that all complement each other's proposals. For many blocks along Myamba Parade, there just isn't sufficient private land available between the existing dwelling and the Council reserve for any meaningful resilience structure to be built.
- To avoid an environmental disaster, in the possible eventuality of one or more pre-1990s built homes being inundated.

If a revetment or other permanent solution is not likely to be supported, other long term options need to be considered and funding applied for. This could involve recurring sand scraping (at a modest cost) and an allocation of funding for dredged material from Transport for NSW's dredging program, to be placed directly on Surfside Beach (or within 100m) consistent with the Eurobodalla Coastal Management Program or for another mechanism to shift sand toward Surfside. There are likely to be any number of alternative solutions.

**Accordingly, Friends of Surfside Beach and the broader community asks Council to:**

- fund further sand scraping as a priority, recognising that the foreshore environment and in turn, lower Surfside, is vulnerable. Sand scraping is cheap and effective;
- include a specific funding line for Surfside beach restoration/maintenance in Council's Operational Plan 2026-27 and future years (noting this topic will be considered at the Council meeting scheduled for 30 June 2026) – see note 4;
- resolve to actively pursue external funding opportunities through State and Federal programs as opportunities arise, for money specifically to address the issues facing Surfside Beach. That would include (at the least) making application to the NSW Government under its Coastal and Estuary Grants program; and to the NSW Reconstruction Authority (as the Lead Agency) for funding under round 4 of the Federal Government's Disaster Ready Fund that opened around 29 May 2026; and
- provide the community with a clear understanding of the pathway forward.

Before closing, I have been asked by a number of locals to make various comments on their behalf. Most views are reflected above, however the following points are frequently raised with me and I wish to document them here:

- A broad section of the community feels that individuals often go unheard and that there is an ongoing lack of information from Council about the way forward. In my capacity as President of Friends of Surfside Beach, I have written to the Mayor asking for Council to convene a community information session. I intend to follow up on that request separately, to see what might be appropriate, achievable and when.
- The current condition of the foreshore and uncertainty about the future is having negative mental health consequences for some residents.
- The community has heard that Council understands the issues and advocates on the community's behalf, but some residents perceive that that is not reflected in Council's actions.

The community appreciates Council's understanding and advocacy, but we need that to turn into action. The late Neale Daniher AO stated that "the mark of a person is not what they say, but what they do". The community is asking Council officials and Councillors to 'do'.

### **Conclusion**

We strongly believe that we are not asking for anything more than what is reasonable in the circumstances.

- Short term - the cost of sand scraping is relatively small with a significant return on investment.
- Short and long term - there are pathways that can be navigated to determine more permanent solutions. We understand Council does not currently have funding for this purpose, but we do expect Council to actively pursue new funding sources.

Further detail about Friends of Surfside Beach and references to some source information is attached.

Thank you again to Dr Holland for your ongoing support and advocacy on this issue. I know you have been working hard behind the scenes to pursue options for assistance.

Jason Ford  
President  
Friends of Surfside Beach Inc

## **Extract from Friends of Surfside Beach Incorporated Constitution**

### **1 Association name**

- (1) Friends of Surfside Beach Incorporated

### **2 Charitable purpose**

- (1) To protect and enhance the coastal environment at Surfside Beach, including its dune systems, wildlife populations, nature reserve and residential foreshore, by supporting sustainable erosion mitigation and prevention solutions, community education and environmental conservation projects.

### **3 Objectives**

- (1) The objects of the association are:
  - (a) To raise funds for the protection of Surfside Beach and adjacent natural areas from coastal erosion.
  - (b) To support and advocate for evidence-based, environmentally responsible erosion control and dune restoration solutions.
  - (c) To engage the local community, residents and volunteers in environmental protection activities.
  - (d) To preserve the biodiversity and ecological health of the Surfside Beach nature reserve and foreshore including local wildlife.
  - (e) To collaborate with local, state and Federal government and other stakeholders to promote long-term sustainability of the coastline.
  - (f) To seek donations, grants and other funding in support of the above purposes.
  - (g) To operate as a not-for-profit and exclusively for charitable purposes under Australian law.

## ATTACHMENT B

### Links and source information

Note 1 - GeoScience Australia publishes coastline mapping data, tracking shoreline recession. The Surfside shoreline appears to have been receding since records began. See Digital Earth Australia at:

<https://maps.dea.ga.gov.au/#share=s-qX1jdpD5qScGiczE2Qh4VRnIT04> (click 'maybe later' to the story button).

Note 2 - the 2005 Surfside Beach foreshore reserve plan of management (adopted 2008) is at [Surfside Beach foreshore reserve plan of management](#).

Note 3.1 - Sand scraping at Surfside Beach is essential to the effective performance of the Surfside West coastal levee that is currently under construction (section 2.4 of the Worley Consulting report within the Surfside West Review of Environmental Factors (REF) references "*The connection of the levee into surrounding ground levels to ensure flood protection requires the dune along Surfside (East) Beach to be nourished to ensure the crest of the levee is at or above 2.5 m AHD*". See [Batemans Bay coastal protection works | Eurobodalla Council](#) - click on the Surfside West Review of Environmental Factors (REF) link and go to section 2.4 of the Worley Consulting report (pdf page 28), which confirms that stage 1 includes protection of private homes, and the project requires nourishment of Surfside East (Surfside Beach). The report provides that:

- *Design should aim to protect the existing at-risk beachfront infrastructure and properties from coastal inundation at 100 year ARI wave and water level condition.*
- *The connection of the levee into surrounding ground levels to ensure flood protection requires the dune along Surfside (East) Beach to be nourished to ensure the crest of the levee is at or above 2.5 m AHD.*

Note 3.2 - page 67 of the CMP also recognises that "*the connection of the levee into the surrounding ground levels to ensure flood protection requires the dune along Surfside Beach to be nourished to ensure the crest of the levee is at or above 2.5m AHD.*" The CMP can be found at [Eurobodalla Open Coast CMP](#).

Note 4 - Friends of Surfside Beach reviewed the Council's proposed budget in the Draft Operational Plan 2026-27 that was open for public exhibition to 31 May 2026, including the items within the Capital Works Program under the strategy and sustainability heading on page 70. There appears to be no allocation of funding in that document specifically relating to Surfside Beach sand scraping or any other activity directly associated with protection of the Surfside Beach foreshore or reserve.