

I am Jason Ford and I am here to talk about the natural disaster affecting Surfside Beach.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge Dr Michael Holland, Member for Bega, who has been a strong advocate in support of the issues I will discuss. He is here in a visible show of that support.

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

The purpose of my presentation is twofold –

- to announce the establishment of Friends of Surfside Beach Incorporated; and
- to put community views on the public record while asking Councillors and Council officials to resolve to allocate funding for sand scraping at Surfside; and to actively pursue further funding sources for short and long term erosion mitigation solutions.

So I will formally announce the establishment of Friends of Surfside Beach, which was incorporated in April 2026. We are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

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

Our objectives include:

raising funds for that purpose;

supporting and advocating for appropriate erosion resilience and dune restoration solutions;

engaging the local community and others;

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 Beach 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 over 120 members and growing, the vast majority being residents and homeowners of Surfside and neighbouring areas.

For more information about the group including how to become a member, visit our website – at www.friendsofsurfsidebeach.org.au.

Turning to Surfside itself -

The issues facing Surfside Beach have been raised repeatedly over many years by residents, community groups and elected representatives. Unfortunately, the beach continues to deteriorate.

Since I spoke to Council's Public Forum in July 2024, Council has advised the community it has advocated to the NSW Government for funding and action (including in relation to dredging works), although the detail of that advocacy is often unclear to the community.

In September 2025, emergency sand scraping was successfully undertaken, providing a reduction in overtopping and inundation risk. The dune created by that work was really appreciated, protecting the foreshore environment and therefore residences, through several storm and tidal events. Council stated that its contribution to the sand scraping was \$15,000, so the return on investment is positive.

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

Sand scraping is not a new idea.

- It's consistent with Council's *Surfside Beach Foreshore Reserve Plan of Management*.
- It's contemplated within the Coastal Management Program
- and a Council report states that maintenance of the Surfside Beach dune to a minimum height is necessary for success of the Surfside West levee currently under construction.
- Council's advice is that sand scraping is currently the only practical short-term management measure available for maintaining and protecting the dune system.

The community therefore believes that funding further scraping should be a priority.

But sand scraping alone isn't 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 CMP, engineered protection measures, or some combination of approaches, those options would require investigation, consultation, environmental assessment, design development, approvals and funding.

All of those processes take time.

If planning doesn't commence until the problem becomes critical, the community and Council would inevitably be responding from a position of urgency rather than preparedness.

There are many reasons for acting now.

Prevention is cheaper than emergency response.

The dune protects not only the natural environment but also homes, roads, services and public assets behind it.

Maintaining the dune today is significantly more effective and economical than waiting until larger intervention becomes unavoidable.

So we need Council leadership here.

Outwardly, Council has sometimes advised homeowners that they can undertake their own resilience work on their own property.

But that just isn't 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 enough private land between the existing house and the Council reserve for any meaningful resilience structure to be built.

Accordingly, Friends of Surfside Beach and the broader community asks Council for four things:

1. Number 1 is to fund further sand scraping as a priority, recognising that the foreshore environment and in turn, lower Surfside, is vulnerable. Sand scraping is cheap but it's effective;
2. include a specific funding line for Surfside beach restoration/maintenance in Council's Operational Plan 2026-27 and future years;
3. resolve to actively pursue external funding opportunities through State and Federal programs as opportunities arise.

At the least, that should include the NSW Government's Coastal and Estuary Grants program and round 4 of the Federal Government's Disaster Ready Fund that opened in May this year; and

4. communicate the pathway forward to the community.

We don't think we are asking for anything more than what is reasonable in the circumstances.

The cost of sand scraping is small with a significant return on investment.

There are funding pathways that can be navigated to determine and action short term resilience options and more permanent solutions.

If funding is awarded, it could be put toward recurring sand scraping, or investigation and costing of options to develop a strategy;

That might then inform further funding applications.

It could be used to supplement the cost of the next round of dredging – so that TfNSW organises dredged material to be placed on the beach as required by the CMP, rather than offshore.

It could be used for any number of things about building resilience for Surfside Beach.

In closing, please read my written submission for more detail and further information.

Happy to take questions.

Q&A

Cttee

Membership

122

How will we raise funds?

What would we do with funds?

Examples of success

- Surfside Sand scraping
- Long beach
- Wooli (nth of Coffs)
- Pumicestone passage and bribie island in qld

Next steps

- Grant apps
- Get in front of Ministers

Similar examples

Wooli Beach, north of Coffs Harbour - Coastal Communities Protection Alliance- Wooli

Established the NSW Coastal Erosion Research Fund – able to offer in-kind dollars to Council and State for scraping.