



# Snapshot

## Barwon South West: testing the application of CoastAdapt's **Working with consultants** information

### Summary

Barwon South West is located in south-west Victoria. The area features quiet coastal towns, a deep-water port, farming, rainforest and the scenic Great Ocean Road. Four local councils in the region have come together to tackle the challenges posed by climate change. One of these, Warrnambool City Council, undertook a procurement process for coastal assessment services to support decision-makers who may need to take into account climate change and sea-level rise in their planning decisions. To facilitate this process, Warrnambool Council utilised the *working with consultants* information available on CoastAdapt.

### Introduction

Communities in the Barwon South West region of Victoria are working together to tackle the challenges posed by climate change. The predicted changes include sea-level rise that will exacerbate existing coastal hazards such as storm surges and coastal erosion.

These changes will have implications for how councils plan their cities and towns and respond to coastal hazards when they arise. An important step in preparing for climate change is to carry out a Local Coastal Hazard Assessment. These provide information, data and guidance on possible changes to the coast related to coastal hazards and climate change. This information can be used confidently at a local scale to inform strategic planning for settlements and natural systems, and to avoid increased risk exposure of future coastal development. Hazard assessments are the first component of adaptation planning on the coast.

### Keywords

Hiring consultants, project briefs, awarding contracts, hazard assessment, test case

## Partners

The Barwon South West Project is a partnership between four Councils and two Coastal Committees of Management in southwestern Victoria together with the State Government. The councils are Warrnambool City Council, Colac Otway Shire Council, Surf Coast Shire Council and Glenelg Shire Council (see Figure 1). The committees are the Great Ocean Road Committee and Otway Coast Committee and the state government is represented by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.



Figure 1: The four Councils in the Barwon South West Partnership - Warrnambool City Council, Colac Otway Shire Council, Surf Coast Shire Council and Glenelg Shire Council. Source: © NCCARF, 2017.

## Process

Warrnambool City Council undertook a procurement process to secure coastal assessment services. The proposed services are to prepare a Barwon South West (BSW) Local Coastal Hazard Assessment that should:

- build a detailed picture of the Barwon South West’s existing and future coastal hazards
- be consistent with the Victorian Government Draft Guidelines for Local Coastal Hazard Assessment support council decision-makers concerned about climate change.

The Barwon South West Local Coastal Hazard Assessment will provide data and information to help guide the development of integrated emergency and hazard management responses, planning and infrastructure. It will also be used to inform the development of future climate adaptation plans.

In order to find the right consultant to deliver these climate services, Warrnambool Council needed to design the job specification, seek tenders, assess the responses and appoint the successful candidate. This provided an ideal opportunity for the Council to undertake a ‘test case’ of the application of CoastAdapt’s process for engaging a consultant.

The *Working with consultants* information in CoastAdapt provides a detailed overview of activities and lessons that should be applied through each stage of the consultant engagement process. It includes the three checklists listed below.

- 1 [Designing a project brief when working with consultants](#)
- 2 [Desirable skills of the consultant and the client](#)
- 3 [Awarding the contract](#)

Each template contains detailed performance criteria, a rating of applicability and detailed considerations that should be taken into account (see Figure 2).

During each stage of the procurement process the Warrnambool Council applied and then assessed the relevant template. The extract from the reporting template below (Figure 3) shows how the criteria were assessed. Each performance criterion received an effectiveness rating, comments on its utility and ideas for improvements.

Template 1: Designing the Project Brief for Hiring Consultants						
Performance Criteria	Rating					Considerations
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
The project aims, objectives and expected deliverables are clearly stated in the brief						• Did the Client seek input to check that project aims, objectives and deliverables are clear in the brief?

Figure 2: Example of one of the factors that should be considered when designing a project brief. Source: © NCCARF, 2017.

**Template 1 Worksheet – Designing the Project Brief for Hiring Consultants**

Performance Criteria	Effectiveness Rating (low to high)	Comments	What improvements could be made?
The project aims, objectives and expected deliverables are clearly stated in the brief.	HIGH	The Project Brief was developed first at a high level and endorsed/reviewed by the Project Reference Group which consisted of all project partners. The Project Brief was then further refined into a more specific tender brief.	Having a high level brief, which outlined the overall aims, objectives and deliverables of the project, signed off by the Project Reference Group, gave the Project Officer and the Project Control Group, greater confidence in refining and developing the tender brief further that we were on the right track to deliver the required outcomes.

Figure 3: Extract from the Warrnambool Council test case report demonstrating the evaluation process the council used for each criterion. Source: modified from CoastAdapt. Source: © NCCARF, 2017.

## Key findings

The Warrnambool Council test case ultimately ended up being a confirmation of the quality of the product in CoastAdapt. For example, the [working with consultants](#) information highlights that the specification for the project should clearly identify deliverables (including reporting, presentations and products). As a result of this test case, the project management team identified areas where, in hindsight, their engagement specification could have been clearer and this would have improved the procurement process.

There were only modest improvements to be made to the CoastAdapt templates as a result of the test case.

For example, the [desirable skills of the consultant and the client](#) template suggests generally checking the skills and references of a consultant. When the project management team checked references, they found that, while many consultants market their highly skilled and experienced staff at the proposal stage, the majority of work was in fact undertaken by junior, less experienced staff. To prevent this, the test case team recommends amending the template to include an assessment of the time allocations set out in the proposal for each team member.



Figure 4: Residents enjoy the coast in Warrnambool Council. Photo: © Warrnambool City Council.



Figure 5: Sunset on beach, Barwon South West coastline. Photo: © Warrnambool City Council.



Figure 6: Township of Warrnambool. Photo: © Warrnambool City Council.

## Conclusion

The test case affirmed the benefit of applying the theoretical information within CoastAdapt to real world situations, where each component and recommendation can be tested. The test case highlighted the quality of CoastAdapt, and can provide reassurance to other councils that CoastAdapt is effective in providing good guidance for the procurement of climate services.

As with any real-world test, the Warrnambool Council was able to recommend minor improvements and make suggestions that will further benefit future users of CoastAdapt.

This snapshot was prepared by Rohan Hamden of Rohan Hamden and Associates as part of a series of test cases conducted to assess CoastAdapt's performance and utility in real life adaptation situations. A special acknowledgement goes to Kristyn McCaskill, Robert Gibson and Lauren Schneider, who also contributed valuable feedback to the test case.

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Figure 7: Beach at Warrnambool. Photo: © Warrnambool City Council.

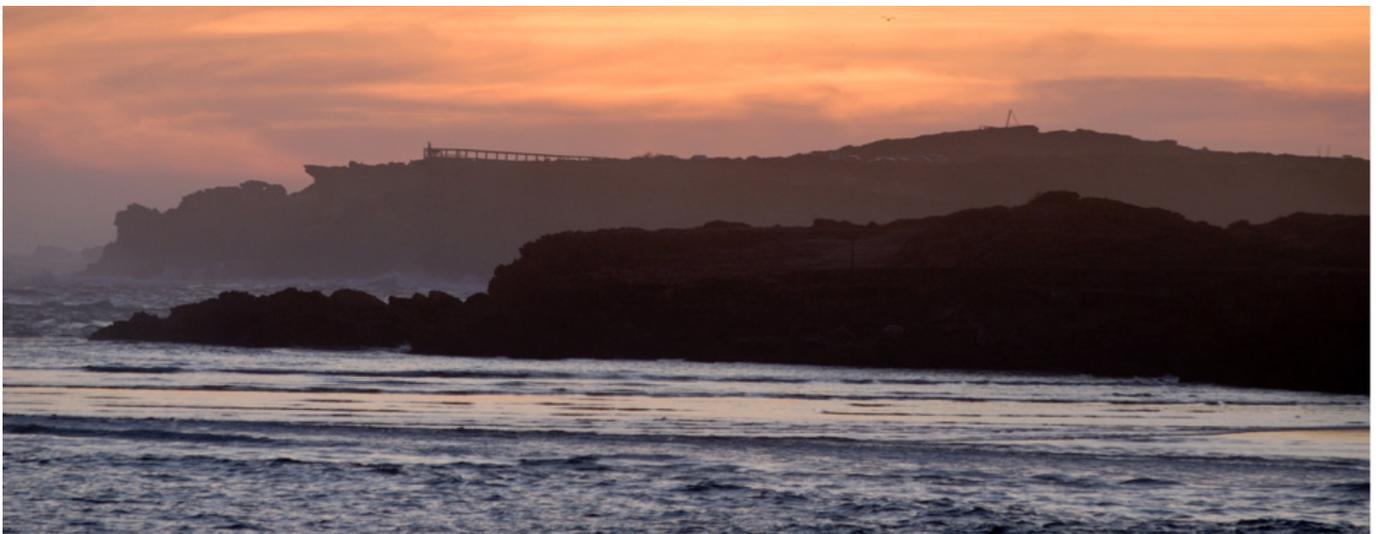


Figure 8: Warrnambool coastline. Photo: © Warrnambool City Council.



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