

Why did we undertake this study?

Coastal management is guided by laws, policies and plans; yet there has been no assessment of the intent or substantiveness of those instruments to further coastal management goals. The absence of such information limits opportunities for improvements in coastal management.

How was it done?

We analysed 92 institutional instruments with a potential role in coastal management in Australia. Each instrument was reviewed against criteria that explored the extent to which the instrument purposefully targeted coastal issues (intentionality), and whether they addressed elements of good practice coastal management (substantivity).

What did we find?

The social, economic and environmental values that the Australian coast provides are recognised within instruments that contribute to coastal management in Australia. However:

- threats to Australia’s coast are not adequately identified or managed in line with good practice coastal management;
- institutional instruments do not make a contribution to coastal management unless intentionally designed to do so; and
- even in the presence of intention, comprehensive mechanisms for action are limited.

The lack of comprehensive action is particularly evident in instruments operating at the local scale.

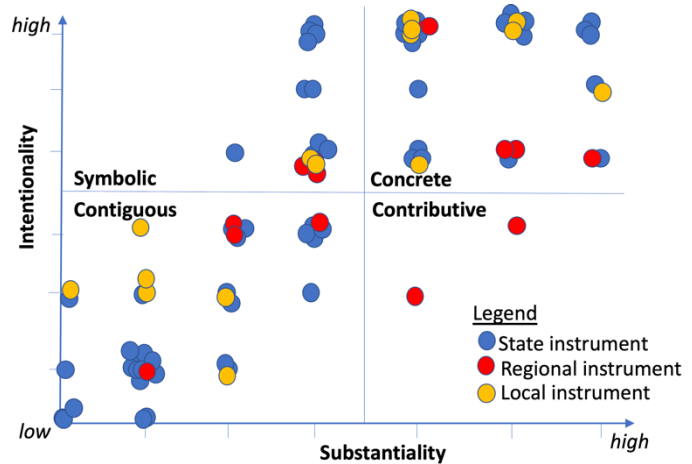


Figure 1: Intentionality and substantiality matrix, Australian institutional instruments

What are the implications?

If the Australian coast is to be effectively managed, there is an urgent need to move beyond recognising the values the coast provides, to comprehensively addressing the multiple and cumulative threats to coastal areas (e.g. climate change, urban development, resource extraction, and pollution). Furthermore, a reliance on local scale action to meet coastal sustainability objectives, through for example allocation of responsibility for coastal management to local governments, is misplaced in the absence of greater national and State level support.

Want more information?

The full paper is available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569121000946>

Citation: Elrick-Barr, CE & Smith, TF, 2021, Policy is rarely intentional or substantial for coastal issues in Australia, *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 207.

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Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change

