



Ms Martha Rojas-Urrego  
Secretary General  
Ramsar Secretariat  
Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196  
GLAND SWITZERLAND

  
Dear Ms ~~Rojas-Urrego~~

I am writing to inform you of likely changes in the ecological character of the Towra Point Nature Reserve Ramsar Site (Ramsar site number 286, designated under the Convention on 21 February 1984), under Article 3.2 of the Ramsar Convention.

The Australian Ramsar Administrative Authority previously wrote to the former Ramsar Secretary General on 14 October 2015, advising of our intention to commission an assessment of a possible change in ecological character for this site. This assessment has now been completed and I have enclosed a copy of the results for your records.

The assessment indicates significant reductions in shorebird diversity and abundance and breeding success of the regionally endangered migratory little tern. Declines in saltmarsh extent, an important habitat for shorebirds, have also been noted.

Reductions in shorebirds have been attributed to erosion of beaches and sand spits used for feeding and roosting. These ongoing geomorphic changes have been caused by dredging, foreshore reclamation and shoreline protection works in other parts of Botany Bay outside of the Ramsar site.

Declines in saltmarsh have been determined as being caused by human-induced changes to sedimentary and hydrological processes. These changes have resulted in encroachment of mangroves into saltmarsh and reduction in the tidal area suitable for saltmarsh establishment. In addition, access roads are preventing the terrestrial expansion of saltmarsh communities and adaptation to new hydrological conditions.

The assessment found that it may not be feasible to restore the site to a state equivalent to that at the time of listing. The Australian and New South Wales Governments will nevertheless continue to work together to take action to improve the health of this important Ramsar site. A number of management activities are already underway to assist in the protection of the Ramsar values, including:

- fox and rat baiting programmes to reduce predation of bird nests
- removal of invasive plants around little tern nesting locations
- restriction of public access to the site, particularly during bird breeding periods



- construction of a new artificial roost site adjacent to the Ramsar site

Local government, catchment management agencies and volunteer organisations are also working together to develop funding proposals for site-specific vegetation management activities.

To address the change in ecological character, a response strategy, outlining a suite of management interventions, will be developed and implemented by the NSW Government and site managers. We will continue to update the Ramsar Secretariat on the progress of actions to address the impacts on the ecological character of the Towra Point Nature Reserve Ramsar site.

Yours sincerely



Mark Taylor  
A/g Administrative Authority for  
the Ramsar Convention in Australia

17 August 2017

**Encl:**

Change in Ecological Character of the Towra Point Nature Reserve Ramsar Site –  
Statement of Reasons