

# Report counts homes facing climate threat

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THE rise of sea levels due to climate change is a direct threat to more than 1660 homes near Newcastle and Wyong, the State Government's first detailed survey of threatened coastline shows.

The report comes as the Planning Minister, Frank Sartor, prepares to fight a court ruling that found he was legally bound to consider climate-related risks of flooding in major coastal developments. His approval for the South Coast's Sandon Point housing development was challenged by environmentalists last November.

Mr Sartor confirmed that he was challenging a judgment in the Land and Environment Court which found he was under an obligation to consider climate change flood risks when he approved the \$150 million Sandon Point development.

The plan called for hundreds of new houses on open land between Thirroul and Bulli in Wollongong.

Mr Sartor told the *Herald* that Justice Biscoe, erred in finding

that the minister had a mandatory obligation to consider whether climate change would lead to an increased flood risk.

"The Sandon Point approval was overturned on a technicality," he said. "If that interpretation of the law stands it would mean that future approvals would be less certain because you can't foresee all the things that you might have to consider in the future."

The case is going to the NSW Court of Appeal in July.

The sea level report, released this month as part of the state's climate change plan, says rising waters and increased storms will affect "virtually all aspects of occupation on low-lying coastal areas". Low-lying coastal areas could suffer from the "Venice effect", in which more frequent high tides could inundate suburbs.

The first phase of aerial laser mapping covered 1400 square kilometres of the Hunter and Central Coast and found the homes, plus other buildings, 73 kilometres of roads and 164 square kilometres of residentially zoned

land were less than one m above current sea level.

It suggested mid-term sponsons such as building walls along urban beaches longer-term strategies involve "managed retreat" from water's edge. Coastal development is expected to "exacerbate risks from sea-level rise and creases in the severity and frequency of storms and coastal flooding by as early as 2050", report said. It notes that climate change planning is essential to the NSW coastal development policy "to ensure future development is not located in areas of high risk from natural hazards including sea level rise, coastal recession, rising water tables and flooding".

A NSW Opposition MP, Mick Richardson, accused Mr Sartor of avoiding his responsibilities as planning minister. "Frank Sartor says the impact of sea level rise on coastlines is an issue for Climate Change Minister Verity Firth, so why did the planning department produce this document?"