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## **Fast-track dredging for Newcastle gas terminal could save Stockton beach**

The NSW Government is being urged to explore the fast-tracking of dredging for the proposed Port of Newcastle liquefied natural gas import terminal, with the extracted river sand used to restore Stockton beach.

The Maritime Union of Australia said dredged sand from the Hunter River, which would have naturally joined Stockton beach before the port was constructed, offered a fast, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable solution to address the current erosion crisis.

MUA Newcastle Branch Secretary Glen Williams urged the State Government to explore fast-tracking the dredging component of the planned \$589 million gas import terminal, allowing the sand to be put to use on Stockton beach while the remaining planning processes were undertaken.

“Just last month, the NSW Government announced that this LNG import terminal has been declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure, allowing a fast-tracking of planning and approval processes,” Mr Williams said.

“As part of the gas terminal development, extensive dredging of river sand will be undertaken, providing the raw material that could be used to save Stockton from this growing erosion crisis.

“The NSW Government must grab hold of this unique opportunity, which not only delivers a cost-effective solution to Stockton’s erosion crisis, but also assists with the creation of quality jobs at an expanded port.”

Mr Williams said that because the proposed gas terminal is on the site of the scrapped T4 coal terminal, much of the leg work around testing of the sand resource and planning for dredging operations had already been undertaken.

“We are reliably informed that the sand that needs to be dredged for this project was previously tested as part of the T4 planning process, with experts finding large reserves of uncontaminated sand that could be used to safely restock the beach,” he said.

“It is very rare to have so much previous planning and assessment work undertaken, and the NSW Government should take advantage of those resources to fast-track the current planning process.

“An ideal solution would be to separate the dredging work from the remainder of the planning process, allowing the port expansion and beach restoration to occur urgently, with the remaining issues resolved separately.

“This is a perfect solution that delivers for the local community and taxpayers, and all that is needed is the political will to make it happen.”

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