

Media Statement

Date: 20.06.2014



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Local values important in sea-level rise adaption planning

Adapting to sea-level rise is a challenging task for communities and governments around the globe. A new University of Melbourne research project places peoples' values and lifestyles at the centre of climate change adaption planning.

The world-leading project developed an approach for identifying the social outcomes of various strategies to adapt to sea-level rise, and trialed the concept of an 'adaptation pathway' that can help communities and governments to take steps to manage the risks of sea-level rise.

"Knowing what people value, how these values come into being and how they change is essential for setting the goals of adaptation," says Professor Jon Barnett, a Chief Investigator in the research team. "Incorporating lived values into adaptation strategies should ensure that the process and outcomes of adaptation is more equitable, inclusive and legitimate, as well as less contentious."

The project was funded by an Australian Research Council 'Linkage Grant'. University of Melbourne researchers worked with five local communities, their local governments and three State government agencies. A diverse range of research methods were used over a three and a half year period to understand the current risks, policy environment, and 'lived values' of people in these locations. The project then tested an approach to adaptation. Through this approach adaptation occurs through a sequence of manageable steps over time, each of which is triggered by a change in environmental (or social) conditions. This was found to be a promising strategy for building consensus among people about why, how and when to act on sea-level rise.

The University of Melbourne team, led by Chief Investigators Professor Jon Barnett, Professor Ruth Fincher, and Dr Anna Hurlimann, have produced a **Guide for Government** which advises local governments and communities on how to identify lived values, relationships and activities that may be impacted by climate change and adaptation, and how to implement a more equitable and inclusive adaptation process.

"We hope that this guide will be used both locally and internationally to expand the current focus of decision-making from the physical and economic impacts of climate change to the less tangible factors that give meaning to peoples' everyday lives," says Dr Hurlimann.

"We have really valued the opportunity to be part of and to learn from the research undertaken by this project" said Kate Nelson, Director Planning and Community at East Gippsland Shire. "The findings of this project are critical to our thinking about how we will work with our communities to approach planning for adaptation into the future because this work has people and the community as the focus for deciding the most appropriate responses".

The Final Report and Guide for Government are available on the project website:

www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/GippslandEast