

MOVING BOUNDARIES:

Managing Development in Regional Coastal Councils in South Australia;

A discussion of the role of Local Government in Climate Change Adaptation.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES:

In 2009 Climate Change Risks to Australia's Coasts: A First Pass National Assessment found that between 25,200 and 43,000 residential dwellings were at risk from inundation in South Australia from a sea level rise of 1.1 meters, and that 7,000 dwellings were found to be within 110 metres, and 1,600 within 55 metres of coastal typologies highly susceptible to erosion (DCC 2009: 106). A significant number of the aforementioned at risk dwellings are located in regional areas serviced by small Local Government Organisations with limited capacities.

The study reveals that:

19% of participants believe that development is still being approved "too close to the coast";

Inadequate and irrelevant information on climate change and sea level rise is a major barrier to Local Government taking action on climate change adaptation;

Climate change is generally accepted as an issue for planning but has varied acceptance in other areas of some Councils, in particular with elected members;

Participants were more worried about climate change than sea level rise;

The majority of Councils in the study only responded to adaptation initiatives imposed or organized by other stakeholders; and

The majority of Councils in the study had not engaged their communities on climate change issues.

From the research the author concludes that unless the perceptions and attitudes of "key actors", in particular elected members, alter to reflect an increased understanding of climate change, the high probability of the IPCC projections, localised impacts, and the benefits of pro-active adaptation planning, climate change adaptation by Local Government in regional coastal areas of South Australia will continue to be varied and largely in response to adaptation activities organised or enforced by other stakeholders.

Given that in the subject areas the majority of participants saw Local Government as an extension of and an advocate for the community, community perceptions and attitudes will also strongly effect the the 76aoto be the landward migration of coastal ecosystems, in the 2100 time period.

It is this author's belief that this cannot be achiev

The author suggests that in the interim it may be prudent to apply a precautionary principle to development on the coast; and for the State Government to indicate spatially an area where individual coastal hazard vulnerability assessments are required at the applicant's expense for new development to be considered (as used by VCAT [1206 2009]).

Additionally, Councils could choose to increase descriptions of non-complying development in their Development Plans. As non-compliant development applications do not have appeal rights (Planning SA 2002: 52), listing additional undesirable development as non-compliant in the strategic planning instrument will make it easier for Development Assessment Panels to refuse development without the fear of litigation in the current time frame. Such an action may increase the level of outcomes that are in accord with policy intentions regarding development in proximity to the coast, and reduce individual applications being exempt.

FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS: