

GCB 20/5/09 JX



Gippsland Coastal Board

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**Submission to the House of Representatives, Climate Change, Water
Environment and the Arts Committee
for the
Inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities**

Presenters: Duncan Malcolm, Chairperson
Natasha Vasey-Ellis, Executive Officer

Thank you to the Committee for having us back to present on some of the recent events and discussions in our region surrounding this important issue. Since we have already presented on our original letter to the Committee we will elaborate on a few other points and recommendations.

'Options for Adapting to Climate Change on the Gippsland Coast'

- An interactive forum with approximately 90 stakeholders -- planning practitioners, NRM/coastal managers, councillors, academics, consultants, council officers, emergency services, business representatives and the development industry.
- Forum participants were particularly interested in presentations from Peter Wheeler and his flood inundation models and in a legal issues presentation from our friends at DLA Phillips Fox.
- A 24 year scenario exercise in which the town of Lakes Entrance was presented with intolerable coastal hazards provided interesting positive results; rather than throwing up their hands in despair the majority of participants envisioned a different future for Lakes Entrance but not no future -- the message was innovation
- Forum participants recommended that the way for the Gippsland region to move forward is to:
 1. Create an alliance of stakeholders with common goals and issues
 2. Develop a regional long-term plan for addressing coastal climate change issues
 3. Focus on social and economic adaptation unknowns and strategies
 4. Create community awareness and engagement opportunities
 5. Seek funds from the state and federal governments for innovative, adaptive solutions (e.g. homes with floating foundations or a cable car connecting lower Lakes Entrance to the high ground)

The Gippsland Coastal Board has done a great deal of thinking around these recommendations and the outcomes of the forum:

- In response to recommendation # 2 from the forum, the Gippsland Coastal Board is proposing a comprehensive Gippsland Coastal Action Plan (CAP) that would consolidate two existing CAPs and introduce a whole new suite of information on climate change into its management objectives.
- The Board and several of our regional partners are supporting an Australian Research Council linkage grant proposal to address item number 3. This proposal is titled 'Equitable local outcomes in adaptation to sea level rise' and, if funded, will help to address some of the social inequities existing in our coastal settlements.
- In addition to these initiatives, the Gippsland Coastal Board is very aware that more needs to be done particularly in regard to forum recommendations # 1, 4 & 5. We urge the Committee to consider regional capacity-building projects to assist with some of these items. We know that the Westport Greenhouse Alliance has been funded through federal dollars and there is widespread support for the creation of a similar alliance of agencies in the rest of Gippsland.

We would also be eager for a Gippsland coastal town to become a demonstration project for innovative adaptation. This would encourage our communities to think beyond the negative effects of climate change and to be more proactive and positive in embracing opportunities.

Please refer to the Wheeler-Kunapo models for a visual representation of the tools that have now been developed on our website. We understand that an interactive GIS tool for Sydney's coastal towns has been developed and is even more informative for a greater portion of the coast. It is our hope that a funding source for this type of tool in Victoria can be identified to provide councils and emergency managers with more detailed information.

The Board also urges that the federal government consider the need for consistency in the implementation of coastal flood management. A standardised level for sea level rise around the entire coast of Australia will not be effective unless the authorities enforcing that level are consistent in their evaluations of risks.

Finally, our coastal region is not alone in containing a great number of indigenous and non-indigenous cultural assets that need to be protected from the combined threats of sea level rise, erosion and storms. Please consider how we are going to identify, protect, and, if necessary, relocate these valuable parts of Australia's heritage.