



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Families, Housing,  
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

<b>Submission No:</b> .....	99
<b>Date Received:</b> .....	5-8-08
<b>Secretary:</b> .....	

Box 7576 Canberra Business Centre  
ACT 2610  
Telephone 1300 653 227  
TTY 1800 260 402  
Facsimile  
E-mail [Bryan.Palmer@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:Bryan.Palmer@fahcsia.gov.au)  
[www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Committee Secretary,

Please find attached the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities.

The Department understands that the majority scientific opinion is that climate change is occurring with consequences for coastal communities. FaHCSIA is interested in the impacts of climate change to the extent that they negatively affect communities, households, and individuals, particularly those with low incomes.

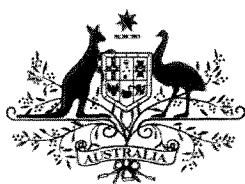
In regard to the impacts of climate change on coastal communities the Department's submission discusses in detail issues surrounding housing stock, remote Indigenous communities, and natural disaster preparedness and recovery.

The Department would be happy to answer any questions the Committee has in regard to the attached submission.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Palmer  
Branch Manager  
Strategic Policy Branch

5 August 2008



## **Australian Government**

---

### **Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

#### **FaHCSIA Submission to the Inquiry into Climate Change and Environmental Impacts on Australian Coastal Communities**

##### **Overview**

This is a submission from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities.

FaHCSIA is not in a position to comment on the science of climate change. However, we understand that the majority scientific opinion is that climate change is occurring with consequences for coastal communities, including:

- rising sea levels;
- increased storm activity; and
- increased incidence of flooding, inundation, and soil erosion.

FaHCSIA is interested in the impacts of climate change to the extent that they negatively affect communities, households, and individuals, particularly those with low incomes. These issues are particularly acute for coastal communities.

It is important to consider climate change not only as a series of one off events but as part of ongoing environmental change occurring in varying increments.

This submission will focus on two of the terms of reference of the inquiry:

- the impact of climate change of coastal areas and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected seas level rises; and
- mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities.

##### **Housing**

FaHCSIA provides program funding for a number of Commonwealth/State housing programs as well as policy advice on welfare and social housing initiatives, programs that reduce and alleviate the impact of homelessness, and policy advice on and payment of Rent Assistance.

If sea levels rise it is possible that a proportion of existing housing stock will be rendered unsuitable. A rise in sea levels may lead to population movement away from coastal areas if they become uninhabitable, leading to significant pressure on existing housing stock.

## Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

In 2007-08 FaHCSIA provided more than \$39 million, through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment, to facilitate recovery to adversely affected Australians, following a number of disasters.

The Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Branch in FaHCSIA is responsible for coordinating recovery policy and recovery responses at the whole of Commonwealth Government level through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee.

FaHCSIA notes that according to the *Climate Change in Australia* report<sup>1</sup> compiled by the Independent Working Group for the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council in 2007, there are a number of possible impacts from climate change for Australia, including:

- increased flood damage;
- increased coastal vulnerability for the east Australian coast, south east Queensland and north east NSW;
- area of Cairns at risk of inundation by a storm surge is likely to double by 2050;
- coasts are likely to be affected by changes in pollution and sediment loads from changes in the intensity and seasonality of river flows; and
- withdrawal of risk coverage in vulnerable areas by private insurers.

A report to the then Australian Greenhouse Office looking at climate change and its effects in Australia also suggests possible increases in severe weather events. These include increases in high bushfire propensity days, increases in the energy of tropical cyclones and non-tropical depressions, more extensive storm surges and sustained heatwaves.<sup>2</sup> Particular regions and communities that would seem to be more vulnerable to the effects from climate change include:

- Low lying coastal populations.
- Tropical and sub-tropical population centres.
- Remote Indigenous communities, particularly in far north Australia.

These predictions indicate that there may be an increased demand for recovery assistance and that an investment in preparedness effort and mitigation strategies may be well worth pursuing to reduce the negative community and social impacts, and costs of such weather events.

An active approach by government, businesses, and the third sector to alleviate the impacts (physical, social and psychological) would provide benefits for coastal communities in the long term.

FaHCSIA is beginning to take such an active approach in facilitating capacity building in communities to improve their ability to prepare for and recover from disasters. A long-term community resilience strategy will be progressed through engagement with

---

<sup>1</sup> *Climate Change in Australia: Regional Impacts and Adaptation – managing the risk for Australia*, Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, June 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability: Promoting an efficient adaptation response in Australia*, Report to the Australian Greenhouse Office, Department of the Environment and Heritage, Final Report, Allen Consulting Group, March 2005.

communities, NGOs, other Australian Government agencies and other levels of government.

### ***Costs of Natural Disasters***

**An Example:** Tropical Cyclone Larry crossed the Queensland coast near Innisfail on 20 March 2006 as a category 5 cyclone. Several north Queensland communities were severely affected, with Innisfail, Mission Beach, Babinda and Tully hardest hit.

These communities experienced heavy flooding, loss of electricity, severe damage to property, houses and crops, road and rail access to the region was closed and food drops were required. Three-hundred Queensland children suffered critical incident stress, months after the event.

The Australian Government provided \$277.8 million to assist the people affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry. The Assistance package included:

- Over \$236.7 million in Australian Government assistance provided directly to affected communities in north Queensland;
- An advance of \$40 million under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA); and
- Over \$1.1 million contribution to the Prime Minister's and Premier's Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal.

FaHCSIA's total contribution amounted to \$50.4 million for a number of measures including:

- Over \$37.9 million for 38,697 ex-gratia payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child for people whose principal place of residence was destroyed, or rendered uninhabitable/inaccessible for more than two weeks;
- Over \$2.3 million for 7,000 ex-gratia payments of \$280 per month for households and \$560 per month for businesses and farmers, for a one-off diesel and petrol fuel excise relief payment,
- Over \$8.8 million for 2,311 ex-gratia income support payments for farmers and small business operators.

### **Capacity to Deal with Disasters**

One of FaHCSIA's strategic outcomes is strong and resilient communities. FaHCSIA has now begun taking a community resilience approach to its work, such as building community capacity for potential disasters. FaHCSIA supports the strengthening of community resilience to disaster management, an approach consistent with principles that support community preparedness and community led recovery.

This broader community resilience strategy for disasters builds on the well advanced work in preparing the third sector for disasters such as a human influenza pandemic. One of the challenges for FaHCSIA is building community capacity in remote areas (some which are coastal communities) where infrastructure and established networks are not abundant.

[A resilient community may be defined in terms of having “the capacity to withstand a disaster and its consequences, return to its pre-disaster state quickly and learn from the disaster experience to achieve higher levels of functioning.”<sup>3</sup> ]

While the primary role for supporting the community following a disaster rests with state and territory governments, the Australian Government supports the states and territories through a range of measures, including the provision of tailored disaster recovery financial and other assistance through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee (AGDRC), which FaHCSIA chairs.

In July 2007, Australian Disaster Recovery Committee Projects Working Group prepared an options paper entitled *Australian Government Disaster Recovery Assistance: Options for Remote Communities*. The main issues raised in this paper cover: vulnerabilities of remote communities (ie ineffective volunteer emergency services, low-take up of available funding sources, socio-economic disadvantage); government responsibilities (summarised above), harnessing mainstream programs for disaster recovery and to help build the foundations of resilient communities, etc.

One of the recommendations in this paper was to identify existing programs that could be leveraged to increase the capacity of remote communities to recover from disasters. FaHCSIA has prepared an audit of existing mainstream programs that attempts to identify those with potential to strengthen disaster recovery capacity in remote communities. The audit identifies those programs that could directly assist remote communities affected by a disaster and programs that have elements that could be harnessed to aid recovery following a disaster.

This working document, on agreement from the AGDRC, is to be provided to the Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Committee (RICAC) to assist in implementing the National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities - *Keeping our Mob Safe*. The DP&RB is currently the FAHCSIA representative on this Committee and to date we have contributed to the development of the strategy and will contribute further to the implementation strategy.

In consultation with stakeholders FaHCSIA developed a pilot volunteer emergency service project in a remote Indigenous community in Western Australia. The project has now been handed over to the WA Government to implement.

The Broome Indigenous Coordination Centre is working with the Western Australia Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) to put in place the seven priorities of *Keeping our Mob Safe*. This includes construction of a cyclone shelter at Bidyadanga (to be commenced), and community volunteer responses in the event of fire at Bidyadanga and in the Beagle Bay Communities. FaHCSIA also participates on District Emergency Management Committees, and is involved in community-level disaster preparedness, management, and recovery for one off climactic events rather than longer term strategies dealing with the impacts of climate change.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Taking a punch: Building a more resilient Australia*, David Templeman and Anthony Bergin, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, May 2008.

## **Remote Coastal Communities**

FaHCSIA has a whole of Government leadership role in the area of Indigenous affairs. There are 329 discrete Indigenous communities across Australia located within 10 kilometres of the coast. The majority of these communities are located in remote locations in northern Australia, across Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. A list and map of these communities is at **Attachment A**. A number of these communities are located in low lying coastal areas, particularly in the Torres Strait. Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait region are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. As such there are serious implications for infrastructure, the traditional way of life and economy of the region. FaHCSIA notes that the Torres Strait Regional Authority has made a separate submission to the Committee.

### **Activities relating to Indigenous coastal communities undertaken by FaHCSIA and other portfolios**

There are a variety of programs underway across portfolios, including those managed by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA).

#### *Indigenous Rangers*

Working in conjunction with DEWHA, FaHCSIA will contribute to the development of a \$90 million fund over five years to train and employ Indigenous rangers as part of the *Caring for Our Country initiative*.

Up to 300 jobs will be created for Indigenous Australians in remote and regional Australia, providing important opportunities for communities to improve their health and well being through capability development.

Rangers will be responsible for a variety of conservation and sustainability tasks, including protecting endangered species and conserving cultural heritage. Forty four positions have been created in South Australia, Queensland and Cape York, undertaking a variety of projects, including the removal of ghost nets to protect marine turtles and dugongs in the Torres Strait.

#### *Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs*

The National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities is an agenda item for the next meeting of the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, to be presented by the Chair of the Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Committee.

The Australian Emergency Management Committee initiated the development of the National Emergency Management Strategy for Remote Indigenous Communities in 2004.

The completed Strategy has been endorsed by the Augmented Australasian Police Minister's Council (renamed Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management).

The Strategy addresses recommendations made in the COAG directed review *National Disasters in Australia: Reforming mitigation, relief and recovery arrangements* (2002) and aims to improve the disaster resilience of remote Indigenous communities.

#### *Australian Government Envirofund*

The Australian Government Envirofund was conducted from 2002 to 2008 as the local action component of the \$5.1 billion Natural Heritage Trust program. Trust funds of over \$135 million through 10 rounds supported community groups and individuals to undertake 8,137 small projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable natural resource use.

The Australian Government Envirofund provided Indigenous communities and/or corporations with funding totalling approximately \$1.36 million for 55 projects to undertake works in coastal locations.

#### *Caring for our Country Community Coastcare*

Community Coastcare is part of the Australian Government's \$2.25 billion Caring for our Country initiative and will provide grants to help local communities better protect our precious coastal environments.

Community Coastcare will provide funding for coastal restoration and preventative conservation works through small grants up to \$50,000 and larger-scale grants up to \$250,000. Funding will be provided for a variety of environmental protection and sustainable resource use activities. Coastcare grants will be available for community groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations or councils and regional natural resource management bodies.

**Attachment A**  
**List of Discrete Indigenous Communities located approx 10 Km from the coastline**  
**categorised by Remoteness - No. per category in ( ).**

**Major Cities of Australia  
(2)**

1. Redfern
2. La Perouse Reserve

**Inner Regional Australia  
(5)**

1. Orient Point
2. Enngonia/Clare Hart
3. Corindi
4. Karuah Aboriginal Reserve
5. Karuaw

**Outer Regional Australia  
(14)**

1. Lake Tyers
2. One Mile
3. Yarrabah
4. Mossman Gorge
5. Goreta (Point Pearce)
6. Bookyana
7. Davenport
8. Railway Dam
9. Bagot
10. Kulaluk
11. Minmarama Park
12. Palmerston Indigenous Village
13. Knuckey Lagoon Indigenous Village
14. Tree Point

**Remote Australia (17)**

1. Wujal Wujal
2. Zig Zag
3. Thompsons Creek
4. Palm Island
5. Wardang Island
6. Seaveiw
7. Poonindie
8. Goolarabooloo
9. Mallingbar
10. Budgagoon
11. Nillirr Irbanjin
12. Yawuru
13. Mungullah
14. Nguui
15. Wadeye
16. Belyuen
17. Bulgul

**Very Remote Australia  
(291)**

1. Gununa
2. Birri Williams
3. Dwendi
4. Lametha
5. Guban Gurru
6. Gunun Woonam
7. Ganthawu
8. Gunbah
9. Dimerah
10. Balalea
11. Thulkurr
12. Lamagian Point
13. Sandlewood River
14. Bidjagun
15. Barrakiah
16. Gunamutha
17. Eagles Nest
18. Mirragudt
19. Hall Point
20. Warnbullin
21. Slim Creek
22. Injinoo
23. Umagico
24. New Mapoon
25. Pyang
26. Napranum
27. Aayka
28. Aurukun
29. Big Lake
30. Bullyard
31. Emu Foot
32. Ikeleth
33. Love River
34. Ngakayangka
35. North Kawi
36. North Kendall
37. Thaangkunh-Whiin
38. Walngal
39. Wathanhiin
40. Wutan
41. Tiitch
42. Pompokuraaw
43. Jimmys Camp
44. Lockhart River
45. Kuku-Yao
46. Old Site
47. Kanthanapu
48. Ambang
49. Bouchat
50. Kowanyumal

51. Old Mapoon
52. Melaman 1
53. Penkelthan
54. War- Paant
55. Wathyan
56. Badu Island
57. St Paul's Village
58. Kubin Village
59. Hammond Island
60. Seisia
61. Bamaga
62. Laura Bay
63. Koonibba
64. Dinahline
65. Koongawa Dundey
66. Munda Wanna Mar
67. Tia Tuckia
68. Warevilla
69. Yarilena
70. Emu Farm
71. Bidyadanga
72. Beagle Bay
73. Munget
74. Djarindjin
75. Lombadina
76. Bardi
77. Burringuk
78. Bells Point
79. Bobieding
80. Brubrunjanjal
81. Budgarjook
82. Bulgin
83. Barringbarr
84. Carnot Springs
85. Chile Creek
86. Djaradjung
87. Djoodood
88. Frazier Downs
89. Gnylmarung
90. Djibbinj
91. Goolarrgon
92. Goonj Arlan
93. Gudumal
94. Gumbarnun
95. Gurrbalgun
96. Imbulgun
97. Ladjadarr Bay
98. Lungabid
99. Malaburru
100. Wulgarding
101. Neem
102. Monbon
103. Morard

1. Discrete Indigenous Communities sourced from CHINS 2006.
2. Remoteness as per ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC).
3. List derived and supplied by the Indigenous Information and Analysis Section (OIPC).



## Attachment A

### List of Discrete Indigenous Communities located approx 10 Km from the coastline categorised by Remoteness - No. per category in ( ).

104.	Mundud	156.	Perrederr	207.	Banthula
105.	Murphy Creek	157.	Tchindi	208.	Barrkira
106.	Ngadarlargin	158.	Ngardinitchi	209.	Dharawarr
107.	Ngamakoon	159.	Kuy	210.	Dhayirri
108.	Ngarlan	160.	Yederr	211.	Dholtji
109.	Nillygan	161.	Fossil Head	212.	Dhudupu
110.	Nudugun	162.	Ngarinji	213.	Djurranalpi
111.	Nyah Nygah	163.	Ngunthak	214.	Galawarra
112.	Tappers Inlet	164.	Kudantiga	215.	Ganpura
113.	Wulununjur	165.	Wumirdin	216.	Garriyak
114.	Yardoogarra	166.	Old Mission	217.	Gawa
115.	Goombading	167.	Maningrida	218.	Gikal
116.	Mudnunn	168.	Berraja	219.	Gitan
117.	Billard	169.	Ji-Bena	220.	Gonguruwuy
118.	Goobiny	170.	Gorong Gorrong	221.	Gulmarri
119.	Oobadoodoong	171.	Gupanga	222.	Mapuru
120.	Maddarr	172.	Nabbarla	223.	Matjanba
121.	Nyumwah		Kunindabba	224.	Mata Mata
122.	Map	173.	Ji-Marda	225.	Muthamul
123.	Midlargoan	174.	Yilan	226.	Nanyingburra
124.	Gunburr	175.	Nadilmuk	227.	Ngayawilli
125.	Mercedes Cove	176.	Amatjatpalk	228.	Nikawu
126.	Yandarrina	177.	Ararlagu	229.	Rorruwuy
127.	Warrayu	178.	Injilatparri	230.	Yirringa
128.	Kalumburu	179.	Waminari	231.	Balma
129.	Nulla Nulla	180.	Wigu	232.	Burrum
130.	Pago	181.	Warruwi	233.	Garanydjirr
131.	Dodnun	182.	Alamirra	234.	Ramangirr
132.	Honeymoon Beach	183.	Walkaa	235.	Wuyagiba
133.	McGowans Island	184.	Gumeragi	236.	Yallakun
134.	Tjalkliwarra	185.	Inngirnatj	237.	Angwura
135.	Punju Ngarugundi	186.	Minjilang	238.	Mangbirri
	Njamal	187.	Araru	239.	Dhipirri
136.	Bindi Bindi	188.	Wilgi	240.	Bayagida
137.	Karmarlinunga	189.	Mariah	241.	Gamarra Guyurra
138.	Larinyuwar	190.	Wanakutja	242.	Lanagarra
139.	Marnebulorgne	191.	Sandy Bay	243.	Mewirnbi
140.	Woolagoodja Island	192.	Arrgamurrmurr	244.	Nangalala
141.	Wearu	193.	Marramarrani	245.	Bodiya
142.	Budulah	194.	Anjamarragu	246.	Milingimbi
143.	Djimu Nguda	195.	Tigers Camp	247.	Yirrkala
144.	Cape Barren Island	196.	Buni-inwunbulak	248.	Yilpra
145.	4 Mile Camp	197.	Irgul Point	249.	Barraratjpi
146.	Pirlangimpi	198.	Adbanae	250.	Bawaka
147.	Putjamirra	199.	Babungi	251.	Biranybirany
148.	Wurankuwu	200.	Yulbara	252.	Balaybalauy
149.	Paru	201.	Uguie Vanderlin	253.	Buymarr
150.	Takamprimili Creek	202.	Wathunga	254.	Dhalingbuy
151.	Yimpynary	203.	Jimiyamilla	255.	Dhuruputjpi
152.	Milikapiti	204.	Mooloowa	256.	Djarrakpi
153.	Ditchi	205.	Black Rock	257.	Galaru
154.	Nangu		Landing	258.	Garrthalala
155.	Nadirri	206.	Galiwinku	259.	Gurkawuy

1. Discrete Indigenous Communities sourced from CHINS 2006.

2. Remoteness as per ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC).

3. List derived and supplied by the Indigenous Information and Analysis Section (OIPC).

### Attachment A

#### List of Discrete Indigenous Communities located approx 10 Km from the coastline categorised by Remoteness - No. per category in ( ).

260.	Gutjangan	271.	Anguarrmanja	282.	Mawulyumanja
261.	Daliwuy Bay	272.	Amanburnunga	283.	Ngaduniyerrk
262.	Yangunbi	273.	Akwalirrumanja	284.	Wurrumenbumanja
263.	Yuduyudu	274.	Mundarrungmundja	285.	Yanbakwa
264.	Alharrgan	275.	Milyakburra	286.	Yedikba
265.	Andanangki	276.	Budji	287.	Galkila
266.	Dharri	277.	Alyingberrma	288.	Dhaniya
267.	Numbulwar	278.	Scott Point	289.	Dhulmulmiya
268.	Yillila	279.	Bartalumba	290.	Yinyikay
269.	Angurugu	280.	Malkala	291.	Dhurambala
270.	Umbakumba	281.	Darrangmurmanja		

1. Discrete Indigenous Communities sourced from CHINS 2006.
2. Remoteness as per ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC).
3. List derived and supplied by the Indigenous Information and Analysis Section (OIPC).

**Attachment A**  
**Map of Discrete Indigenous Communities located approx 10 Km from the coastline**

