



The crew from the expedition boat for Global Green and Green Cross International spell out SOS on an iceberg in Gerlache Strait, Antarctica. Photo by Sebastian Copeland

A National People's Assembly: Addressing the humanitarian consequences of climate-induced sea level rise in Asia Pacific, and Australia's response

Recommendations to the
Australian Federal Government

29 - 30 August 2008



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About this Report

This report is the outcome from a deliberative democracy project following the method of a consensus conference. A panel of 14 representative Australian citizens developed the report's findings after intensive briefings by eminent experts and group deliberation.

This report was presented to Mr. Howard Bamsey, Australia's Special Envoy on Climate Change, in Brisbane on 30 August 2008. Mr. Bamsey is representing Minister for Climate Change and Water, Penny Wong in receiving this report.

The report contains recommendations by the National People's Assembly to the Australian Federal Government about how Australia should respond to the humanitarian challenge of sea level rise in the Asia Pacific.

Preamble

We the members of the Citizen's Panel on sea level rise and population displacement in the Asia Pacific, recognise that we are at the forefront of an issue that requires a compassionate, ethical approach that is addressed with urgency and forward planning.

Participation in this panel has provided us with opportunities to learn about the contribution to rising sea levels made by climate change, and the impact that has on the people of the Asia-Pacific region. We have heard of the connection between poverty and the effects of climate change, with the poorest people having less ability to adapt, and therefore suffering disproportionately. No international convention currently protects people displaced by climate change or any other environmental impact.

The panel would like to recognise and applaud the Government's actions on climate change to date. We support their direction to date and commend their leadership. As representatives of the Australian public, we ask that these steps be seen as just the beginning and encourage you to take bold steps to address this urgent issue.

As citizens of a wealthy nation, we have a responsibility to provide support where needed and to prepare for future displacement. Recognising that Australians have the highest carbon emissions per capita in the world, we have a responsibility to investigate and develop more sustainable forms of energy for the future, and to alter energy-intensive aspects of our current lifestyle. We also recognise the need to share our developing knowledge of climate change adaptation throughout the region so that we can effect positive change for the health of the planet and all of its people.

The opportunity to debate, discuss and make recommendations on how Australia can best prepare for sea level rise and population displacement has been

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exciting, challenging and an honour for all the members of the panel. To contribute to policies which will protect both the future welfare of fellow humans and to all life on Earth has been a privilege.

This Citizen's Panel consists of 14 individuals from across Australia, all of whom have come to participate in this deliberative exercise with an open mind and the shared hope to contribute to Australia's initiating, and participating, in positive change. We come from a range of backgrounds, with a myriad of personal stories and histories, as well as a broad spectrum of understandings and beliefs about the causes and effects of climate change.

As members of this panel, we have been given the unique opportunity to listen, ask questions, debate, and reflect on the complexities of climate change without the influence of politics, media or economics. From this process we have begun to develop our own deeper understanding of what climate change means at the individual, community, national and global levels. We have begun to appreciate climate change as a complex, global issue that requires immediate and comprehensive attention.

As representatives of the Australian public, we support Australia as a nation to make positive choices to address the problems of climate change and its impact on the Asia-Pacific. We state with certainty and emphasis, that we are ready for change, and urge the Australian Government to have the courage to create the legislation necessary to effect this change.

We move forward in light of a number of the principles that we have identified around the complex issue of climate change. These principles include our understanding that, where the humanitarian consequences of climate-induced sea level rise in the Asia Pacific, and Australia's response are concerned:

1. There is a problem;
2. The problem is global, and one for which we have a responsibility as a global "leader";
3. There are potential solutions to address aspects of the problem, but they require decisions, leadership and support; and
4. People are inherently at the center of the cause, the consequence and the solution.

While it was our diversities that brought us together as a panel, it is our shared future, and our developing understanding of the fragility of that future that unites us in the desire to be part of the solution, and it is with this aim that we make the recommendations in this report.

An addendum from the two younger panel members:

We, as young people have grown up in a global society. The most urgent global issue facing our generation is climate change. Climate change isn't simply a problem of the future. The lives of people in the Asia Pacific have become victims of climate change and climate induced sea level rise consequences.

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While climate change will affect everyone, we will be living with the legacy of policy choices today. As a developed and prosperous country in the Asia Pacific region, we are well placed to become leaders in climate change adaptation, mitigation and forward thinking policy directions in relation to sea level rise induced migration. The engagement of young people as true stakeholders and future custodians of the region is the first step to a meaningful discussion and strategic direction to the issue of this era.

Introduction

Over the past 12 weeks the National People's Assembly has participated in two full weekends of presentations and discussions with scientific and industry experts, as well as specialists in the fields of human and social development, and law. From the information and deliberations that came from these sessions, we worked together to develop a set of questions that, when answered, would contribute greatly to our knowledge, understanding, and capacity to make sound and reasonable recommendations regarding Australia's response to the complex issues of climate induced sea-level rise and population displacement in the Asia-Pacific. Those questions were answered amongst members of the Australian public. The respondents to these questions were specialists, experts and officials from those disciplines and organisations that are the most pertinent and authoritative to the issue.

From the information we received, the panel further deliberated and produced a set of recommendations on how Australia should respond to the immense challenge that we are faced with now and in the future. As these recommendations have been authored by lay people from varied communities in Australia, we trust that they will be accepted as the representative opinion of the 'average' Australian and be viewed as both necessary and acceptable to all Australians.

Given the gravity and consequence of our responsibility, this consensus conference process has been approached with the same passion that would be found in any community group, and the same professionalism that would be found in any corporate board room across Australia.

As with any process, the problems must be identified and quantified. The National People's Assembly has heard from a range of scientific and industry experts, as well as having considered the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). We accept that there are still differing opinions and research upon whether climate change is human induced or not, and that this debate is likely to continue for some time yet. The IPCC have stated, with 90% certainty, that the anthropogenic generation and emission of heat trapping gases have caused "most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid 20th century".

Most people would consider 90% an 'excellent' mark in an exam, and similarly, the National People's Assembly consider "90% certainty" to be 'excellent' grounds to take action regarding human induced emissions of Greenhouse gases (GHG), for example carbon dioxide and methane.

To the immovable sceptics of human induced climate change, we say that we are choosing to 'suspend doubt' in regard to this issue. If 3000 esteemed scientists are indeed wrong about global climate change, and all that happens by taking action is to create a way of life that is more environmentally sustainable, with less pollution, improved air and water quality, and a reduced impact upon the fragile environment of this Earth and all the millions of other species that live here, then that isn't such a terrible consequence of our choice to take action at this time.

In accepting that global climate change is upon us, there is a need to take action. This action will require a global commitment the likes of which we have never seen. Climate change has no borders and will affect all peoples, regardless of race, religion or wealth. The severity of the change may differ across the Earth, but all of the world must take some action, be it mitigation, adaptation or both. The greatest onus for immediate action lies upon those countries that have historically been the largest emitters of pollutants, commonly referred to as Greenhouse gases. The action taken towards mitigation and adaptation must be as borderless as climate change itself for the majority of global citizens most likely to suffer the effects of temperature and sea level rise are not those with a large carbon footprint of responsibility at their feet.

The loudest argument against taking action seems to be based upon financial and economic concerns regarding the costs and economic downturn that has been presumed to go hand in hand with taking action. With a careful, steady and all encompassing approach there is little reason why this change should cause any major, long lasting financial disadvantage to anyone in Australia. The desire to hang onto old technologies and ways of thinking is understandable, but not desirable. A paradigm shift is needed, and faster than the usual generational shift. The National People's Assembly, believe the need for action and change should be approached as an immense opportunity for Australia to grow new business into the future in a sustainable way and to be leaders in the global development of this new world.

Summary of recommendations

Mitigation

1. The panel accepts that there will be initial financial costs in the establishment of an emissions trading scheme (ETS). Given this, we advocate that some of the proceeds from the sale of carbon credits be used to assist those who are less able to make the transition to a low carbon economy – both individuals and businesses.
2. Establish a **Climate Change Innovation Fund** for renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency and community initiatives to reduce emission, controlled by a Climate Change Commission (see below), using funds from the Future Fund and the ETS.
3. Develop national legislation to facilitate energy efficiency in emissions intensive areas that can be effectively communicated and delivered including:
 - Manufacturing
 - Resource sector
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial buildings – new and retro-fitting
 - Residential housing – new and retro-fitting
 - Existing road and rail transport
 - Vehicles - industrial, commercial and residential.
4. The pathway to mitigation also requires major changes in our approaches to resource provision and infrastructure. This should include allowances for decentralised sources of water and energy and new and flexible incentives to encourage public and private contributions to our resource base.
5. Develop a transparent labelling system to provide emissions and/or energy information on consumer goods to allow informed purchases and empower consumer choice.
6. Recognising that it is often more expensive to develop new, low-emissions technologies in the early phases of development, provide tax concessions to provide incentives for innovative development.

Adaptation

7. The panel advocates that Australia must prioritise adaptation research and planning in areas that address the topics of water and food security, biodiversity, conservation and health. Research and planning should be comprehensive, locally based, and include local peoples in areas throughout the region, and must incorporate all of the principles outlined above.
8. The panel urges the Federal Government to direct primary planning and funding for adaptation strategies to first recognise and incorporate the natural adaptive capacities of the physical environments in question and to assist communities to rediscover their sustainable social practices.

9. We recommend the development of capacity building relationships across the region that include women, indigenous people, young people, faith-based groups, and local and international NGOs. This can be done through student exchange and volunteer programs, climate change adaptation and disaster training, agricultural demonstrations, professional development and resource and technology sharing.
10. We recommend that Australia play a significant role in assisting communities in the region to plan appropriate sustainable adaptation initiatives and technologies e.g. whole systems analysis.
11. We recommend that Australia's primary role in adaptation in the Asia-Pacific is to facilitate local ownership, and accountability, of adaptation programs.
12. We recommend that all adaptation programs include communication strategies that are accessible and comprehensible to the entire local population.

Governance

13. Establish a national **Climate Change Commission** that has executive power to implement key climate change initiatives and is independent, non-partisan and exists outside of the election cycle.
 - The Climate Change Commission would have input from government, non-government organisations, scientists, community groups and industry representatives whose executive members are elected/appointed outside of the election cycle. This commission would be tasked with driving and implementing the changes necessary to transition to a low emissions future and respond to climate change impacts throughout the region.
 - The Commission must ensure that all levels of government work together to avoid duplication in addressing impacts of climate change.
 - The Commission should coordinate the disparate climate change research being carried out across Australian universities, government agencies, NGOs and other organisations and provide a central repository for that research so that it may be better used and understood.
14. We recommend that our national climate change and energy policies be aligned across all levels of government to ensure that they are uniformly focused on reducing our national emissions. At present our energy model is working against emissions reductions and until this is rectified, we are not truly addressing the issue.
15. The panel strongly supports the Government's effort to encourage global leadership on climate change through international forums, particularly the 15th Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 and preparatory meetings.

16. We urge the Government to lobby at the upcoming COP for "avoided deforestation" to be recognised as an important regional option to reduce emissions.
17. In addition to supporting our domestic initiatives, the panel recommends the Australian Government should learn from and co-operate with global leaders taking action on climate change such as the European Union, United Kingdom and California as well as innovative developing countries.
18. We call on the Australian Government to communicate about all aspects of our Emissions Trading Scheme and other emissions reductions initiatives as they are developed to countries in the Asia Pacific region and in particular China and India.

Preparing for Displacement

19. Australia should initiate and participate in the global discussion of how developed countries can assist forced migrants deal with climate change.
20. We recommend the Federal Government develop policies that establish more flexible visa options for our neighbours impacted by climate change to work, study and, where appropriate, live, in Australia.
21. The panel recommends the development of an insurance scheme that provides immediate payout for disaster relief for vulnerable Asia Pacific communities.
22. We recommend the integration of activities of all agencies tasked with handling expected disaster relief and migration issues. The Australian Government must invest in inter-agency operational training including disaster relief preparedness in the region. For example the Asia Pacific Centre for Civil Military cooperation should be instructed and resourced to model the Australian Government response to climate change.
23. In preparing for migration and population displacement, the Australian Government needs to increase resources and support to enable settlement and community integration, specifically for climate change migrants.
24. Australia should prepare a priority time line for sea level rise that identifies specific danger levels in Australian and regional communities that lead to appropriate responses.

Youth

25. Use existing youth communications networks in Australia and the Asia Pacific region to assist in educating and informing the wider communities about the issue, risks and potential impacts of climate change and sea rise as young people have a higher literacy in climate change and the use of new media technologies as key communications methods.
26. Ensure that the Australian Youth Forum, as the key engagement and participation method for the Australian Federal Government to interact with

young Australians, has climate change and sea level rise as a key issue on its ongoing agenda.

27. The Australian Government must take a greater role in supporting and involving existing youth NGOs such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and the United Nations Youth Association of Australia (UNYA) as key avenues of communicating to young people on the issue not only in Australia but in the region.

THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS

28. We recommend that the Australian Government, in partnership with Torres Strait Island citizens, produce a plan involving all of the departments and organisations relevant to the region. This plan must address climate change impacts, preparedness, adaptation and emergency response. This partnership must involve an ongoing dialogue with a broad range of the community.
29. We recommend as a first imperative, the Government must act now to alleviate the impacts of sea level rise on Torres Strait Island communities in a way that incorporates all of the recommendations made in this report.

Questions, Comments and Recommendations

1: MITIGATION

How can Australia reduce the likelihood of sea level rise in Asia Pacific?

Questions

- What are the economic differences between the Garnaut recommendations and the Green Paper ETS proposed by the Federal Government?
- What effect will adopting the latter have on addressing emissions reductions in Australia?
- What are the Government's arguments for watering down the ETS by excluding some sectors in the first round?
- What is the pathway for transitioning from our current energy model to proposed energy efficient technologies and renewable energies?
- How will these energy mix changes incorporate, and contribute to the concerns and consequences of sea-level rise in the Asia Pacific region?

Comments

The Panel recognises that although climate change mitigation is not the key focus of this panel's recommendations, we realise that Australia's mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions plays a critical role in reducing the risk of increased sea level rise in the region.

The Panel supports a national emissions trading scheme by 2010 as one of the key ways in which the Government can facilitate rapid greenhouse gas emission reductions. In this model we advocate that the credits should be auctioned or sold at a price to ensure they have real value. The system should be flexible and responsive to international agreements while continuously reducing our emissions.

The panel feels that Australia is too dependent on coal, a significant greenhouse gas contributor, as our major energy source and while we recognise that a transition to low-emissions energy systems is complex, we strongly encourage the Government to rapidly step up funding for renewable energy to facilitate that transition.

With regard to coal exports the panel encourages the Government to establish guidelines and business relationships with trading partners that leads to sharing technology and business opportunities in the responsible use of coal as we move to a low emissions economy.

Australia can continue to compete in what will become the old world economic market or make the choice to move forward as a leader with a strategic advantage in the region by moving toward a new, low-emissions economy. We strongly recommend the latter option.

Recommendations

1. The panel accepts that there will be initial financial costs in the establishment of an emissions trading scheme (ETS). Given this, we advocate that some of the proceeds from the sale of carbon credits be used to assist those who are less able to make the transition to a low carbon economy – both individuals and businesses.
2. Establish a **Climate Change Innovation Fund** for renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency and community initiatives to reduce emission, controlled by a Climate Change Commission (see below), using funds from the Future Fund and the ETS.
3. Develop national legislation to facilitate energy efficiency in emissions intensive areas that can be effectively communicated and delivered including:
 - Manufacturing
 - Resource sector
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial buildings – new and retro-fitting
 - Residential housing – new and retro-fitting
 - Existing road and rail transport
 - Vehicles - industrial, commercial and residential.
4. The pathway to mitigation also requires major changes in our approaches to resource provision and infrastructure. This should include allowances for decentralised sources of water and energy and new and flexible incentives to encourage public and private contributions to our resource base.
5. Develop a transparent labelling system to provide emissions and/or energy information on consumer goods to allow informed purchases and empower consumer choice.
6. Recognising that it is often more expensive to develop new, low-emissions technologies in the early phases of development, provide tax concessions to provide incentives for innovative development.

2. ADAPTATION

Questions

- What legislation and action plans would be appropriate to address the risk and consequences of climate-induced sea level rise to Australia?
- What adaptation policies and projects can Australia support to assist communities in the region to adapt to sea level rise and extreme weather impacts?
- Specifically, how can these be developed in partnership with governments, community organisations and businesses across the region?

- What short and long term biodiversity and community resilience objectives can be supported by these partnerships in a way that responds to sea level rise with open dialogue and cultural sensitivity?
- What is the appropriate timeframe for action and how in your opinion can we ensure that this action occurs?

Comments

The panel recognises that no matter how much we do to mitigate climate change in Australia, we need to urgently prepare for adaptation in the Asia Pacific region.

Protecting our national, regional and international biodiversity should be at the core of all adaptation policy. By protecting our environment we are also protecting our long-term sustainability.

People are at the centre of adaptation, and therefore adaptation policy can never overlook the needs, priorities, and understandings of the diverse local populations. No one policy or plan for adaptation should be developed through a 'one-size fits all' approach.

Adaptation strategies should prioritise dealing with the short-term needs of people in the Asia-Pacific region to cope with the current consequences of sea-level rise. For these strategies to adequately build resilience of communities to continually adapt and respond to a constantly changing climate, these objectives must lead towards long-term goals for sustainable development through processes of ongoing capacity building.

Recommendations

7. The panel advocates that Australia must prioritise adaptation research and planning in areas that address the topics of water and food security, biodiversity, conservation and health. Research and planning should be comprehensive, locally based, and include local peoples in areas throughout the region, and must incorporate all of the principles outlined above.
8. The panel urges the Federal Government to direct primary planning and funding for adaptation strategies to first recognise and incorporate the natural adaptive capacities of the physical environments in question and to assist communities to rediscover their sustainable social practices.
9. We recommend the development of capacity building relationships across the region that include women, indigenous people, young people, faith-based groups, and local and international NGOs. This can be done through student exchange and volunteer programs, climate change adaptation and disaster training, agricultural demonstrations, professional development and resource and technology sharing.
10. We recommend that Australia play a significant role in assisting communities in the region to plan appropriate sustainable adaptation initiatives and technologies e.g. whole systems analysis.
11. We recommend that Australia's primary role in adaptation in the Asia-Pacific is to facilitate local ownership, and accountability, of adaptation programs.

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12. We recommend that all adaptation programs include communication strategies that are accessible and comprehensible to the entire local population.

3. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Questions

- Given existing regional structures such as the Pacific Islands Forum and Kevin Rudd's proposed Asia-Pacific Union, how are these addressing climate change adaptation in the region and how can this panel recommend improvements to these strategies?
- Could you expand on how these regional structures will build community resilience through improving energy, agriculture, biodiversity and water and food security?
- What is the best pathway to expediently establish an Australian apolitical, collaborative body that has the executive authority to effectively address the issues of climate change adaptation and mitigation?
- Which groups, departments, and organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) need to be included in this body?
- How should it be effectively structured and managed?
- In relation to sea-level rise, what are the top three priorities such a body must take for effective action now and in the long term?

Comments

The issue of climate change is urgent and critical. We appreciate the need for debate and continued research into climate change, however we stress that it is now time for specific decisions and direct action.

The panel was struck by the fact that economic concerns were over-emphasised in all of the research, presentations and information we received during our three-month investigation. We believe there is an urgent need to prioritise the environmental, humanitarian and ethical dimensions that are inherent in climate change.

The panel believes addressing the issues under consideration needs a steady, long-term approach in Australia and around Asia Pacific, which is incompatible with the short-term nature of a political system operating in three to four year terms.

Recommendations

13. Establish a national **Climate Change Commission** that has executive power to implement key climate change initiatives and is independent, non-partisan and exists outside of the election cycle.

- The Climate Change Commission would have input from government, non-government organisations, scientists, community groups and industry representatives whose executive members are elected/appointed outside of the election cycle. This commission

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would be tasked with driving and implementing the changes necessary to transition to a low emissions future and respond to climate change impacts throughout the region.

- The Commission must ensure that all levels of government work together to avoid duplication in addressing impacts of climate change.
- The Commission should coordinate the disparate climate change research being carried out across Australian universities, government agencies, NGOs and other organisations and provide a central repository for that research so that it may be better used and understood.

14. We recommend that our national climate change and energy policies be aligned across all levels of government to ensure that they are uniformly focused on reducing our national emissions. At present our energy model is working against emissions reductions and until this is rectified, we are not truly addressing the issue.

15. The panel strongly supports the Government's effort to encourage global leadership on climate change through international forums, particularly the 15th Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 and preparatory meetings.

16. We urge the Government to lobby at the upcoming COP for "avoided deforestation" to be recognised as an important regional option to reduce emissions.

17. In addition to supporting our domestic initiatives, the panel recommends the Australian Government should learn from and co-operate with global leaders taking action on climate change such as the European Union, United Kingdom and California as well as innovative developing countries.

18. We call on the Australian Government to communicate about all aspects of our Emissions Trading Scheme and other emissions reductions initiatives as they are developed to countries in the Asia Pacific region and in particular China and India.

5. PREPARING FOR DISPLACEMENT

Questions

- What plans do DFAT and the ADF have now for the movement and relocation of large numbers of people around the Asia-Pacific?
- How does this involve other government departments and organisations in Australia and the region?
- Is there a disconnect between disaster relief and the broader concerns of long-term climate change consequences in the region?
- How will Australia move towards legally recognising 'forced migrants of climate change'?

- What are the diplomatic and legal pathways that Australia might take to recognise and respond to the impending consequences of population displacement due to climate change?
- How might new migration pathways include flexible visas, skills development and education scholarships?
- How can we better learn from past immigration stories (from Australia and other countries), to improve current migration pathways (including the current legal constraints) and to help us respond as a global citizen in the face of human displacement in the Asia-Pacific?
- What other mechanisms may be useful to improve our current migration systems?

Comments

Population movement is a likely result of the impact of sea level rise and extreme weather in our region. Australia is a regional power with the capability and responsibility to display leadership. We ask that this leadership is exercised with a generational outlook that emphasises the ethics of today's difficult choices over basic cost analysis.

The panel encourages a regional approach involving New Zealand, Pacific Island nations, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia as well as Asia to prepare for the far-reaching impacts of climate change.

Recommendations

19. Australia should initiate and participate in the global discussion of how developed countries can assist forced migrants deal with climate change.
20. We recommend the Federal Government develop policies that establish more flexible visa options for our neighbours impacted by climate change to work, study and, where appropriate, live, in Australia.
21. The panel recommends the development of an insurance scheme that provides immediate payout for disaster relief for vulnerable Asia Pacific communities.
22. We recommend the integration of activities of all agencies tasked with handling expected disaster relief and migration issues. The Australian Government must invest in inter-agency operational training including disaster relief preparedness in the region. For example the Asia Pacific Centre for Civil Military cooperation should be instructed and resourced to model the Australian Government response to climate change.
23. In preparing for migration and population displacement, the Australian Government needs to increase resources and support to enable settlement and community integration, specifically for climate change migrants.
24. Australia should prepare a priority time line for sea level rise that identifies specific danger levels in Australian and regional communities that lead to appropriate responses.

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6. Youth

Recommendations

25. Use existing youth communications networks in Australia and the Asia Pacific region to assist in educating and informing the wider communities about the issue, risks and potential impacts of climate change and sea rise as young people have a higher literacy in climate change and the use of new media technologies as key communications methods.
26. Ensure that the Australian Youth Forum, as the key engagement and participation method for the Australian Federal Government to interact with young Australians, has climate change and sea level rise as a key issue on its ongoing agenda.
27. The Australian Government must take a greater role in supporting and involving existing youth NGOs such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and the United Nations Youth Association of Australia (UNYA) as key avenues of communicating to young people on the issue not only in Australia but in the region.

7. THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS

Questions

- How can relevant legislation and plans address and respond to the needs of our indigenous Torres Strait Island communities?

Comments

We urge immediate action to recognise and address the current and ongoing threat of sea level rise in Australia's Torres Strait Islands.

There is a lack of understanding and political focus on the fact that sea level rise is already impacting Australians in the Torres Strait communities.

From research and expert opinion, there seems to be no action plan to respond to sea level rise in Torres Strait Islands – particularly the low-lying islands of Saibai and Boigu.

Recommendations

28. We recommend that the Australian Government, in partnership with Torres Strait Island citizens, produce a plan involving all of the departments and organisations relevant to the region. This plan must address climate change impacts, preparedness, adaptation and emergency response. This partnership must involve an ongoing dialogue with a broad range of the community.
29. We recommend as a first imperative, the Government must act now to alleviate the impacts of sea level rise on Torres Strait Island communities in a way that incorporates all of the recommendations made in this report.

List of Speakers, Questions and Conference Agenda

Friday 29 August

9:00am – 10:15am

1. MITIGATION - How can Australia reduce the likelihood of sea level rise in Asia Pacific?

- What are the economic differences between the Garnaut recommendations and the Green Paper ETS proposed by the Federal Government?
- What effect will adopting the latter have on addressing emissions reductions in Australia?
- What are the Government's arguments for watering down the ETS by excluding some sectors in the first round?
- What is the pathway for transitioning from our current energy model to proposed energy efficient technologies and renewable energies?
- How will these energy mix changes incorporate, and contribute to the concerns and consequences of sea-level rise in the Asia Pacific region?

Speakers:

Dr. Lorraine Stephenson

Ernst & Young, Partner, National Climate Change Leader

Dr. Hugh Saddler

Managing Director, Energy Strategies and Member of the Experts Group on Emissions Trading, Board member, The Climate Institute, Author of "Energy in Australia: Politics and Economics"

Prof. Paul Hardisty

Global Director, Sustainability, EcoNomicsTM, Worley Parsons

10:45am – 12:15pm

ADAPTATION

- What legislation and action plans would be appropriate to address the risk and consequences of climate-induced sea level rise to Australia?
- What adaptation policies and projects can Australia support to assist communities in the region to adapt to sea level rise and extreme weather impacts?
- Specifically, how can these be developed in partnership with governments, community organisations and businesses across the region?
- What short and long term biodiversity and community resilience objectives can be supported by these partnerships in a way that responds to sea level rise with open dialogue and cultural sensitivity?

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- What is the appropriate timeframe for action and how in your opinion can we ensure that this action occurs?

Speakers:

Prof. Jan McDonald

Deputy Dean, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Griffith University

Mr. Heinrich Eder

Managing Director, Munich Re, Director of the Insurance Council of Australia and Director of the Australian and New Zealand Institute of Insurance and Finance

Dr. Andrew Ash

Director of CSIRO, Climate Adaptation Flagship and Rangeland system scientist and Board member of the Indian Ocean Climate Initiative

Ms. Jenny Hayward-Jones

The Myer Foundation Melanesia Program, Lowy Institute, Former officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Deputy Head of Mission in Port Vila and Ankara from 2004 to 2007

Mr. James Hardcastle

Senior Advisor for Asia Pacific External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy and Participant at the Global Conferences on Oceans, Coasts and Islands

Mr. Andrew Hewett

CEO Oxfam and Coordinator of Oxfam International's response to the crisis in Timor, Vice-President of the Australian Council for International Development

Prof. Jon Barnett

Australian Research Council Fellow, School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Melbourne and Member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the Global Environmental Change and Human Security. Former Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at Melbourne University

12:15am – 12:30pm

THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS - How can relevant legislation and plans address and respond to the needs of our indigenous Torres Strait Island communities?

1:30pm – 3:00pm

GOVERNANCE

- Given existing regional structures such as the Pacific Islands Forum and Kevin Rudd's proposed Asia-Pacific Union, how are these addressing climate change adaptation in the region and how can this panel recommend improvements to these strategies?

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- Could you expand on how these regional structures will build community resilience through improving energy, agriculture, biodiversity and water and food security?
- What is the best pathway to expediently establish an Australian apolitical, collaborative body that has the executive authority to effectively address the issues of climate change adaptation and mitigation?
- Which groups, departments, and organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) need to be included in this body?
- How should it be effectively structured and managed?
- In relation to sea-level rise, what are the top three priorities such a body must take for effective action now and in the long term?

Speakers:

The Hon. Duncan Kerr

Duncan Kerr, Parliamentary Secretary South Pacific and Barrister, Justice Minister from 1993 to 1996 and Vice-president of the United Nations Association of Australia, Tasmanian Branch

Ms. Jenny Hayward-Jones

Dr. Lorraine Stephenson

Mr. Andrew Hewett

3:30pm – 5:00pm

PREPARING FOR DISPLACEMENT If adaptation strategies don't work, population movement is a likely result of the impacts of sea level rise and extreme weather in our region.

- What plans do DFAT and the ADF have now for the movement and relocation of large numbers of people around the Asia-Pacific?
- How does this involve other government departments and organisations in Australia and the region?
- Is there a disconnect between disaster relief and the broader concerns of long-term climate change consequences in the region?
- How will Australia move towards legally recognising 'forced migrants of climate change'?
- What are the diplomatic and legal pathways that Australia might take to recognise and respond to the impending consequences of population displacement due to climate change?
- How might new migration pathways include flexible visas, skills development and education scholarships?
- How can we better learn from past immigration stories (from Australia and other countries), to improve current migration pathways (including the current legal constraints) and to help us respond as a global citizen in the face of human displacement in the Asia-Pacific?

For information, see the Green Cross Australia website:

<http://www.greencrossaustralia.org/>

- What other mechanisms may be useful to improve our current migration systems?

Speakers

Dr. Anthony Bergin

Director of Research Programs for ASPI, Associate Professor at the University of NSW, Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and Director of the Australian Defence Studies Centre (ADSC) from 1991 to 2003, Co-Author of Future Unknown: The Terrorist threat to Australian maritime security

Mr. Greg Goebel

Head of QLD Red Cross and former Director of Road Safety for the Queensland Government, Former Director of Public Transport for the Queensland Government, Received the Centenary Medal in 2001

Dr. Jane McAdam

Senior Lecturer & Director of International Law Programs, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales

Ms. Margaret Piper

Independent Consultant and Former Executive Director, Refugee Council of Australia, Member of the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council, Steering committee member of the Refugee Advisory Committee to the Brisbane City Council

Ms. Sonia Caton

Director and Principal Solicitor, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service

About the National People's Assembly Process

The National People's Assembly is an event organized to stimulate public debate and give ordinary citizens a chance to directly affect the policies of the Australian Government.

The Assembly is structured like a European style 'consensus conference', which is a proven method of participatory democracy. To find out more about how a consensus conference works, you can visit the **First Australian Consensus Conference on Gene Technology in the Food Chain website**.

Fourteen citizens from across Australia were selected to make up the National People's Assembly. They had access to world-class academics, government leaders, senior business people and other experts for two weekends in June and July to help them prepare key questions in order to develop recommendations on this issue.

After hearing from experts matched to their final questions, the panel deliberated and prepared the recommendations in this report to be made available to the government, industry, scientists, the media and the community. Mr. Howard Bamsey, Australia's Special Envoy on Climate Change will meet with the National People's Assembly on its closing day to receive their report.

Green Cross will use the recommendations by the People's Assembly to liaise with government leaders and the business communities to ensure they are taken into account when major decisions are made in both the public and private sector around the issue of sea level rise in the region.

Those involved in the National People's Assembly

Many people are directly involved in the National People's Assembly:

The Chair

The Chair of the event ensures the citizens have the very best possible interaction with experts and receive answers to their key questions on the issue.

The Steering Committee

The first step is for the Steering Committee - a who's who of senior leaders from the community, science, business and government sectors - to identify a comprehensive information base of articles, speeches, videos and other media that will be used to brief the Citizens' Panel. The Steering Committee also selects experts who can address each of the important dimensions of the topic.

The Facilitator

The Facilitator plays a crucial role, meeting with the Citizens' Panel a few times before the conference to work through background briefing papers and giving the citizens a chance to meet with key experts. During the conference itself the facilitator managed the flow of dialogue between experts and citizens, and helped to find ways of engaging with the public audience.

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The National People's Assembly

The People's Assembly members were recruited using a rigorous process to ensure that the group is broadly representative of Australia as a whole. Green Cross worked with an expert marketing and science communication volunteer, who recommended the approach used for selecting the panel.

The Writer

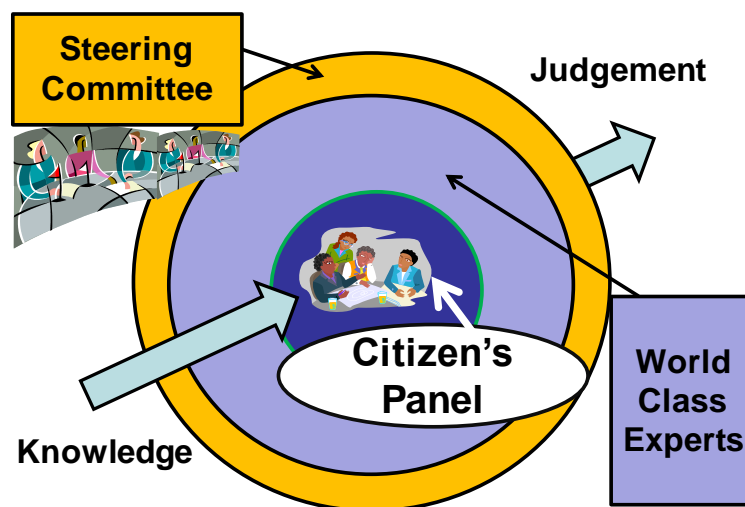
The writer for the National People's Assembly assists the panel in drafting their questions and final recommendations as well as preparing the background information necessary for their final report.

The Public

Both days of the National People's Assembly were open to the public.

The third and final weekend was held at the State Library of Queensland on 29th and 30th of August, hosted by **Griffith University**, as part of the **Riverfestival**.

On the final day of proceedings, the National People's Assembly Report was presented to Mr. Howard Bamsey, Australia's Special Envoy on Climate Change. Mr. Bamsey is representing Minister for Climate Change and Water, Penny Wong in receiving this report. The report will also be made available to local and State governments, and the Australian and international media.



National People's Assembly panel – list of participants

The National People's Assembly was made up of fourteen people brought together to discuss, debate and determine a set of recommendations on how best Australia can prepare for sea level rise and population displacement.

The participants were recruited from across Australia and selected to ensure fair representation of our country's diversity. Our fourteen citizens are aged between 17 - 69 and include:

- 1. Mrs Madonna Barraclough**, Environmental artist, teacher and writer, Mt Gravatt, QLD
- 2. Mr Terry Bowring**, Retired Food Engineer, Bilgola Plateau, NSW
- 3. Mr Scot Brown**, City Planner, Windsor, QLD
- 4. Ms Kat Byron**, Youth Harm Reduction Officer, Darwin, NT
- 5. Mrs Rosemary Catt**, Member of the Anglican Church, Grafton, NSW
- 6. Ms Michelle Drummond**, Conflict Management, Stepney, SA
- 7. Ms Maeva Fried**, Arctic explorer, Newport, VIC, formerly from New Caledonia
- 8. Dr Daniel Heredia**, Medical Practitioner, Perth, WA
- 9. Mr Robert Mrozowski**, Local Government Environmental Health Officer, Sunshine Coast, QLD
- 10. Mr Brodie Paul**, QLD Government, Father, St Lucia, QLD, formerly of China coast
- 11. Mr Simon Tannock**, Research Scientist, Environmental Engineer, Moggill, QLD, formerly of New Zealand
- 12. Mrs Kristin Warr**, Educator, University of Tasmania, Hobart, TAS, formerly of the United States
- 13. Mr Ben Webster**, Student, Youth Parliament, Mount Isa, QLD
- 14. Ms Jan Williams**, Indigenous Australian Artist and Elder, Hervey Bay, QLD

Assisting the National People's Assembly

Conference Coordinators: Green Cross Australia

Mara Bún, CEO

Anya Phelan, Project Manager

Fran Curro, Office Manager

Karen Speirs, Volunteers Director

Conference Chair: **Judge Neil McLauchlan**

Conference Facilitator: **Sheena Boughen**, Diapason Pty Ltd

Conference Writer: **Blair Palese**

The National People's Assembly Steering Committee

Rev. Tim Costello A.O

(CEO World Vision)

Dr. Andrew Ash

(Director of CSIRO Climate Adaptation National Research Flagship)

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO (President Australian Conservation Foundation)

Mr. Julian Burnside QC

(Barrister and Author)

Mr. Tony Coleman

(Chief Risk Officer and Group Actuary, Insurance Australia Group)

Professor Jan McDonald

(Head of Griffith University Climate Response Program)

Professor Paul Hardisty

(Global Director, Sustainability, EcoNomics – Worley Parsons)

Mr. Heinrich Eder

(Managing Director, Munich Holdings)

Ms. Jenny McGregor

(CEO, Asialink, University of Melbourne)

Mr. Daniel Almagor

(CEO, Engineers Without Borders Australia)

Dr. Jane McAdam

(Director, Gilbert + Tobin Centre for Public Law, UNSW)

Mr. David Freeman

(FRGS, Lieutenant Colonel Chief Legal Officer 1st Division & Deployable Joint Force Headquarters)

Prof. Stuart White

(Director, Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS)

Additional contributions from:

Representatives from Torres Strait Islands and Torres Strait Regional Authority
Mr. Ben Kofe, Architect from Tuvalu
Dr. John Church, CSIRO
Dr. Paul Brown, UNSW
Mr. Rik Modderman, Principal Consultant Operations & Integration, Worley
Parsons

Sponsors

Green Cross – Lead proponent and organiser, CEO Mara Bun

Griffith University – Conference Host

The Queensland Government – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) -
Sponsor

Riverfestival – Production Consultant

**Green Cross Australia and the National People's
Assembly organisers would like to thank:**

- The Citizens' Panel for their dedication and thoughtful commitment.
- The experts who volunteered their time on the final day of deliberation, and over the past four months.
- The Steering Committee who provided the judgment and networks to make this event happen.
- Ian O'Connor, Vice Chancellor of Griffith University, who understood the importance of this initiative. Griffith University, the project Host, has established the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, and sponsored core aspects of this project.
- The Perpetual Foundation for allocating funds to make this forum possible. Perpetual manage over 950 private charitable trusts around Australia. For this event, funds were provided from the Edward Corbould Charitable Trust. We thank these donors for their gift.
- The George Alexander Foundation for allocating funds to make this project a reality for community and environmental impact.
- The Queensland State Government and especially the EPA and Office of Climate Change, for their support for our vision and for this project.
- Brisbane City Council for its support of the National People's Assembly.
- Mr. Howard Bamsey, Australia's Special Envoy on Climate Change.
- All of the experts and participants to the public speaker program on Saturday, 30 August, as part of the Riverfestival, including:
 - Mr. Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision,
 - Mr. Wilson da Silva, Editor in Chief of Cosmos and G Magazines,

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<http://www.greencrossaustralia.org/>

- Prof. Paul Hardisty, Global Director, Sustainability, EcoNomicsTM, Worley Parsons
- Dr. Alison Green, Senior Marine Scientist for the Asia Pacific, The Nature Conservancy
- Prof. Jon Barnett, Australian Research Council Fellow in the School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies
- The Hon. Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water
- Ms. Sonia Caton, Director, Principal Solicitor, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service
- Ms. Molly Harriss Olson, Director, EcoFutures and Green Cross Advisory Panel Member
- Ms. Maroochy Barambah, Songwoman of the Turrbal People
- Dr. John Cole, Executive Director, Sustainability Innovation, Queensland EPA.