

Climate Proofing as a Regional Development Strategy

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Abstract

Climate change is now acknowledged to be a reality (with the exception of a minority of individual skeptics and fringe bodies) by governments, industry and communities of space and interest. Extreme weather events, climatic variability and change are cross cutting and impinge variously upon biophysical, socio-economic and governmental systems at all scales. The immediacy of the challenges that situation this raises is given focus by the understanding that although Australia contributes less than two percent of the world's equivalent CO₂ emissions the lands and waters of the continent are being impacted by 100 percent of the effects global warming. This gives 'urgency' to adapting to climatic variability and climate change at regional and local scales.

As a step towards addressing this urgency, 'Climate Proofing' is being promoted as a proactive adaptation response strategy by SEQ Catchments (SEQC), the Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG) and Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). This is being done in collaboration with Climate Change, Coasts and Catchments, at the Faculty of Science, Health and Education at the University of the Sunshine Coast (C4@USC). To date, this joint initiative (which commenced in 2006) has encompassed a range of demonstration activities at regional, local and community scales in the contiguous South East Queensland, Burnett Mary and Gladstone regions of Queensland.

This paper has three purposes. First, to outline what the term 'climate proofing' means and how it is being actioned; second, to overview the work undertaken to date; and thirdly, to indicate how the project-work to date in SEQ can be built on and rolled-out to by regional bodies (such as Regional Development Commissions in Western Australia and NRM groups), Local Government Authorities (LGA's) and communities as a long-term regional development strategy.

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Peter Waterman is an environmental planner with over 37 years professional experience working for governmental and private sector clients. Professional work has encompassed:

- strategic and statutory planning
- intergovernmental relations
- environmental research (physical, biological, social, economic and cultural); public and environmental health, and
- natural resource and environmental management

Peter's formal professional qualifications are in geography, social science, urban planning and environmental management.

Commencing work as an environmental planning consultant in 1970, Peter has carried out a large number of land use planning and environmental impact and risk assessments in all Australian States and Territories as well as overseas. Through this work Peter has become an acknowledged leader in developing integrated and holistic approaches to the environmental management of natural systems, industrial facilities and built infrastructure with a geographic focus on the coastal zone.

On becoming actively involved with the USC in 2001, Peter has represented the University:

- as the Convenor of the Port of Brisbane Community Consultative Committee (2001-07)
- on the Steering Committee of the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) conferences
- as a Director of the Consortium for Integrated Resources Management (CIRM), and
- on the Management Group for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF)