



Six step plan for councils adapting to climate change

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Sydney coastal councils now have a six step plan for adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The recommendations, published today in a Sydney Coastal Councils Group report – ‘Case Studies of Adaptive Capacity’ – were drawn from a two year research project by CSIRO, the University of the Sunshine Coast and WWF Australia.

The report makes six key recommendations for councils:

- “Know Your Enemy” – improve understanding of social and ecological vulnerability
- “Plan for Change” – build climate change into planning frameworks
- “Get Smart” – develop education and outreach programs
- “Act, Watch and Learn” – monitor, evaluate and report
- “Put the House in Order” – develop internal and external arrangements
- “Money Talks” – enhance revenue streams to councils

“This marks a turning point for efforts by Sydney’s coastal councils to respond proactively to climate risk,” said Geoff Withycombe, Executive Officer of the Sydney Coastal Councils Group. “It lays all the issues on the table and provides a transparent appraisal of both the efforts councils are currently making, but also the numerous challenges that lie ahead.”

Researchers interviewed more than 30 council staff and councillors, producing an in-depth analysis of barriers to climate adaptation for local governments in coastal Sydney.

“Based on our discussions with local government, we are recommending a broad range of actions to help councils respond proactively to climate risk,” said Dr Benjamin Preston of the CSIRO Climate Adaptation Flagship.

Professor Tim Smith of the University of the Sunshine Coast said: “While there are barriers to advancing climate adaptation on the policy agenda, there are also many opportunities and ‘low-hanging fruit’ that councils can seize to enhance their preparedness in a changing climate.”

The report recommends more than 40 actions (clustered into the above list of six key areas) that will build the capacity of all councils to adapt to climate change, and give councils a framework for prioritising these actions

“Overcoming these challenges will require focus, and recognition that local governments can’t do it all on their own,” said Councillor Wendy McMurdo, Chair of the SCCG. “We need a focused and targeted response for all levels of government, industry and community to ensure we get things right, make the right investments and act as efficiently and effectively as possible.”

This report is the final phase of a two year project funded by the Australian Government Department of Climate Change (DCC) Adaptation Program. For more info:

www.sydneycostalcouncils.com.au/system-approach-to-regional-climate-change-adaptation-strategies-in-metropolises/index.php

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