

Rethinking the Policy/Planning Approach to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management.

M. Howes¹, M. Heazle¹, P. Burton¹, D. McEvoy², R. Preston³, D. Grant-Smith¹, K. Bosomworth², P. Tangney¹, K. Reis¹

¹Griffith University

²RMIT University

³Queensland Department of Community Safety

Australia is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, particularly through the increasing frequency and/or intensity of disasters such as floods and bushfires. There is, however, considerable uncertainty about when and how disaster management organisations should address climate change and the appropriate level of priority that it should be given. To add to these problems, effective government responses have been hamstrung by a growing antipathy from the general public and uncertainty on the most effective approach to both climate change and disaster risk management. It seems that the release of the best available scientific research, open inquiries and extensive public consultations through existing policymaking and planning processes have not been sufficient to produce a consensus on the best way forward. This paper addresses these issues by summarising the progress to date of an NCCARF funded research project: *The Right Tool for the Job: Achieving climate change adaptation outcomes through improved disaster management policies, planning and risk management strategies*. The aims of the project are threefold: (1) To reconceptualise the framing of the problem of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management; (2) To develop a new approach to this problem based on this re-conceptualisation; and, (3) To identify how existing policy and planning tools may be modified based on this new approach. To achieve these aims the project is undertaking a comparative analysis of four case studies: the 2011 Brisbane floods; the 2009 Victorian Bushfires; the 2011 Perth Hills Bushfires; and the development of disaster risk management policies at various levels of government. Overall it is argued that we need to rethink the approach to climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, the tools that have been used, and the underlying theoretical framework on which planning and policymaking is based.