



# Good Shepherd

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## 1. Introduction

Good Shepherd welcomes the opportunity by the Productivity Commission to comment on the inquiry into barriers to effective climate change adaptation.

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand carries the tradition of the Good Shepherd Sisters, with a mission to promote a world of justice and peaceful co-existence in which all people are able to enjoy the fullness of life that is the right of every human being. We acknowledge that peace is threatened by the exploitation of nature and climate change has been identified within our congregation and agencies as a particular challenge to the realisation of human dignity and barrier to universal human rights for communities in Australia. Each year our agencies support tens of thousands of women, families and young people across Australia and New Zealand and we are extremely concerned with how climate change is negatively impacting on those already disadvantaged by poverty.

### 1.1 Terms of Reference

The productivity Commission is undertaking an inquiry into barriers to effective climate change adaptation. The Commission is looking at specific barriers that inhibit effective adaptation to unavoidable climate change, and at high priority actions to address those barriers. In doing so, the commission is to examine the costs and benefits of the options to address barriers, including no action options. The role of markets and non-market mechanisms will be assessed in facilitating adaptation and the appropriateness of government intervention will also be examined.

### 1.2 Basis for action

The premise for this review is that Australia faces unavoidable impacts from climate change in coming years and these could have the power to severely disadvantage communities. The most basic principle behind this is acceptance that climate change is real. Before any individual, group, organisation or government can be motivated to alter behaviour to adapt in some form, they must accept the following principles:

- That climate change is a reality, the planet is warming and weather patterns are changing due primarily to an increase in greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere caused predominantly by human behaviours.
- There is reasonable evidence that consequential changes to the weather and seasons has the potential to impact on people in many ways; on their personal life, their family,

on their farm or business and on the ecology that surrounds them in their neighbourhood, region and state.

- Because the precise impacts and time frame in which these changes will occur is difficult to ascertain exactly, and each person, population, gender, industry and area will be affected differently, a flexible approach to adaptation is required.
- Effective adaptation is possible, indeed, it is necessary.
- There are key benefits that will result from early and purposeful proactive adaptation and there is growing evidence that the benefits will outweigh the costs of early action.

### **1.3 Effective adaptation**

Good Shepherd is particularly interested in the question posed by the Productivity Commission as to what constitutes 'effective' adaptation and how this can be measured. Climate change will impact on each individual differently depending on their age, occupation, gender, region, socioeconomic status and other factors and there will be a widely varying degree of adaptive capacity and resilience depending on one's unique situation. Good Shepherd is particularly concerned for the welfare of those most vulnerable in our communities. It is because of this concern and the work of our agencies with women, young people, families, those suffering from poverty, financial and societal exclusion that we are impelled to offer the following suggestions as to what would constitute effective and just adaptation in Australia. Whilst there is a large focus on risks and associated costs, we would like to see justice and equity principles become a primary part of any policies related to climate change and adaptation.

Effective adaptation will be:

- Communicated clearly – starting with the basic principles of climate change and expected impacts;
- Holistic;
- Pro-active;
- Understood and implemented across all levels of government, with participation from civil society and particularly the private sector;
- Enhance social inclusion with a focus on poverty-reduction;
- Take into account gender issues;
- Have a focus on eco-system preservation and reparation; and
- Involve private sector investment and understanding.

Adaptation policies should serve to further enhance equity in Australia, maximising the net benefit to the community as a whole. Climate change challenges some fundamentals of our society such as the idea of externalities in the production chain; responses then are opportunities to adjust a system which has allowed for the exploitation of nature and the atmosphere, the combined effects of which disproportionately disadvantage the poor. Let us take this opportunity to be audacious and holistic in our response and endeavour to create a more just, sustainable Australia in which the rights and dignity of each individual are ensured.

## **2. Issues in effective adaptation**

## 2.1 Communication and public education

**Recommendation:** Communicating the impacts of climate change is a key role of the Government and communication should be clear and accessible. A bi-partisan stance on expected impacts would aid greatly in moving the debate along, enabling the community to engage with what is required for effective adaptation.

Effective action on adaptation by individuals, communities and regions depends critically on an informed view about climate change. A central role of the Government in the development and implementation of adaptation responses should be through communication and the provision of relevant resources to the community regarding the factual basis of climate change. All communication from the Government to the Australian public regarding climate change should be unequivocal and deepen and enhance community understanding of climate change and its impacts based on scientific knowledge.

Although adaptation measures alone will not deal with the long-term problems caused by climate change, the dialogue and practical engagement resulting from adaptation projects will be valuable in and of themselves in raising public awareness of the underlying mitigation issues. For example, in enacting strong water management and conservation activities in the community, participants gain knowledge not only of water scarcity issues and how they can adapt their lifestyle, but also the root of the problem, such as drought caused by climate change. Given that information and acceptance of climate change is the first step in mitigation and adaptation, if communicated successfully adaptation policies can lead to effective mitigation as well as community empowerment.

## 2.2 Contributing to community understanding

Communication on climate change needs to be consistent, credible and continuous and requires more than simply providing the information; uptake is essential. Effective communication in this realm has been identified as: providing the right information to the right people at the right time in the most effective way through credible sources while ensuring through feedback mechanisms that the message is correctly understood and acted upon.<sup>1</sup> For community adaptation to occur, climate change and its impacts cannot be presented and debated as belief based on political allegiance or any other affiliation.

The existence of climate change challenges principles and assumptions upon which we have built our society. Changing our way of life is inconvenient and there is not a lot of political reward for adaption decisions. Therefore a bi-partisan stance on adaptation with private sector support recognising the accepted impacts of climate change is required to ensure successive governments can safeguard the community without worrying about their political careers. This will prevent the political and policy process from become, itself, a barrier to adaptation.

## 2.2 Holistic and pro-active adaptation at varying levels

**Recommendation:** Adaptation should be undertaken by all levels of society and should be proactive,

<sup>1</sup> The Weakest Link: The uptake of knowledge on vulnerability into decision-making. Lisa Dilling, CSTPR/CIRES, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA; <http://www.nccarf.edu.au/conference2010/wp-content/uploads/Lisa-Dilling.pdf>

targeting risks before they eventuate. Local government should be supported and resourced to identify risks while communication should be facilitated by the Federal Government. Because there will continue to be unknowns in regards to climate change impacts, all adaptation actions should have a wider net benefit to the community.

Effective adaptation must be holistic: with localised, tailored bottom-up solutions based on local risks, implemented by local government and supported by civil society, complemented by community education and top level policies and communication from the Federal Government, leading to an understanding and shared commitment to solutions by all tiers of government, civil society and importantly, the private sector simultaneously.

One serious barrier to adaptation is the difficulty in identifying and quantifying likely impacts of climate change. Some of this can be addressed by sector analysis but this needs to be heavily supplemented by detailed regional analysis. Local government is well placed to do this in conjunction with people and organisations in their communities but are inadequately resourced and many are struggling. Well-targeted information and modest grants to skill up staff would be an effective and economic contribution. Local initiatives such as this can be complemented by actions at the top level.

Many adaptation policies could be designed to mitigate further climate change while simultaneously aiding communities in adjusting to impacts. As made explicit in Chapter 13 of the Garnaut Review, adaptation should not be viewed in isolation from mitigation.<sup>2</sup> Policies should address local needs with national objectives simultaneously and be firmly rooted in justice. The best kind of policies for climate change adaptation will be synergetic with mitigation and societal equity goals. This will prevent funding for adaptation from competing with funding for mitigation and other social services important to community wellbeing.

The extent of adaptation required in Australia is still an unknown and it will be decades before there is a clearer picture. However, it is a matter of justice that adaptation should not be reactive, acknowledging that it will be those most vulnerable who are unable to cope with impacts as they arise. The most effective adaptation will be proactive and predict needs before they become urgent. Because of these unknowns, it is best to make sensible choices that have a net benefit to the community regardless of what changes end up actually occurring. This means focusing on building the capacity of communities to respond.

### **Poverty**

**Recommendation:** Improving people's capacity to adapt will require a focus on overall poverty reduction. This inquiry is an opportunity to design detailed schemes of assistance for people in high areas of need who cannot afford to take up adaptation measures on their own, for example some private tenants, public and social housing tenants, elderly and pensioner home owners with homes in flood/storm/fire prone areas and others on a fixed income for whom simple steps remain out of

<sup>2</sup> Ross Garnaut; The Garnaut Climate Change Review; Chapter 13: An Australian Policy Framework.  
<http://www.garnautreview.org.au/chp13.htm>

reach.

Poverty is a key factor in determining one's vulnerability to climate change as it greatly limits adaptation capacity. Limited access to land, money, credit, information, health care, personal mobility and education all create barriers to effective climate change adaptation, and can even determine one's ability to survive and recover from natural disasters. Effective climate change adaptation will require integrating climate risks and opportunities into national planning across several sectors with a focus on poverty reduction.

Reducing poverty will be a key tool in building a community's capacity to respond to climate change impacts and adapt appropriately and, as poverty disproportionately affects specific populations and climate change disproportionately affects particular regions, certain groups will require specific attention in adaptation policy design. 11.1 per cent of Australians were living in poverty in 2006. Those most at risk and facing the largest barrier to climate change adaptation are single people over the age of 65, unemployed persons, children and single parents, people living with a disability and indigenous households.<sup>3</sup>

The IPCC has identified indigenous Australians as being particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change as they tend to be excluded from mainstream economic activity, experiencing higher rates of poverty and lower rates of employment.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous communities need special consideration when examining barriers to climate change adaptation due to these factors as well as location issues, with a significant proportion of communities living in remote areas, coastal regions susceptible to sea level rise and other unique factors.

Government programs addressing adaptation need to focus specifically on low-income households, not only in education but by providing funding to enable this population to access adaptation methods which allow them to cope with price impacts resulting from climate change and natural disasters. Empowerment through participation in a sustainable society is key in creating the social will and flexibility required to effectively adapt and this should be an explicit feature in adaptation policy design. The private sector should play a role here also, by providing affordable adaptation options for those without the economic means to otherwise adapt.

### 2.3 Importance of community services sector

**Recommendation:** The Government should increase support to the community services sector to proactively anticipate a rise in needs specifically from low-income and culturally diverse communities in climate change adaptation. If climate change predictions are correct, as indicated in the Issues Paper, community needs will accelerate and services should be bolstered in anticipation. The community services sector is often a main point of contact for these groups and should be incorporated into adaptation policy design and supported and resourced to carry out adaptation activities with vulnerable communities. This could start through targeted training for the community services sector as to climate change impacts as well as methods of incorporating adaptation into

<sup>3</sup> Australian Council of Social Services, Poverty Report, October 2010.  
[http://acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS\\_poverty\\_report\\_October\\_2010.pdf](http://acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS_poverty_report_October_2010.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability; Chapter 12 Australia and New Zealand. <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=483#1276>

program and project design.

Effective adaptation will be reflected in resilient communities who have the strength to face the impacts of climate change, who are not dependent on a single solution and who can quickly adjust to uncertain and changing realities. The community services sector will play a key role in localised solutions for climate change adaptation. It can be imagined that there will be an increase in those seeking services and the sector may require additional government support to ensure vulnerable pockets of the community are adequately safeguarded. Support for the community services sector should be factored into policy design around adaptation measures. It will also be important to acknowledge the role that the community services sector plays in supporting culturally and linguistically diverse groups. These communities can often be isolated for many reasons and the government should further resource the community services sector and welfare agencies who regularly are in contact with this community to support their specific adaptation to climate change impacts. Some policies may need specific tailoring in recognition of cultural factors.

## 2.4 Gender

**Recommendation:** Australia, in line with the United Nations and other international sources, should incorporate gender aspects into climate change discourse and literature, and design policies and programs to actively engage women in adaptation measures as a key priority area. Research into gender specific adaptation and methods to secure women's engagement in adaptation and a sustainable economy would be particularly helpful to overcome this barrier.

Gender, like poverty, is a crosscutting issue in climate change and needs to be recognised within adaptation policies. Gender and poverty are interrelated and together create mutually reinforcing barriers that hinder women's ability to adapt, inhibiting the community's adaptation abilities as a whole. The UN commission on the Status of Women has stated that all governments '*should be encouraged to mainstream gender perspectives into their national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change.*'<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development has pointed out that climate change has specific gender characteristics because women, due to social roles, discrimination and higher incidents of poverty are affected differently by climate change and extreme climactic events. This is further exacerbated by women not being sufficiently represented in decision-making processes on adaptation and mitigation strategies.<sup>6</sup>

Women particularly need to be included in adaptation policies, not only because they experience different levels of vulnerability but also because they have different perspectives and

<sup>5</sup> Mainstreaming gender equality and promoting empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies; United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women, Fifty-fifth session; March 2011. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/other-outcomes/Climate-change-adv-unedit.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change; UN Women Watch; [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate\\_change/downloads/Women\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Factsheet.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf)

experiences to contribute.<sup>7</sup> It has been widely noted internationally that women are important agents of change in achieving climate change objectives in regard to adaptation and mitigation.<sup>8</sup>

Despite international recognition of the role of women in climate change policy development, Australia has yet to incorporate gender aspects into climate change policies. The current National Climate Change Adaptation Program in Australia does not mention gender or the different implications of climate change for men and women and the same is true of most documents regarding the formulation of national climate change policy.<sup>9</sup> The lack of gendering within climate change policies will continue to be a systemic barrier to adaptation unless remedied through research and effective policy development. Policies and initiatives regarding adaptation should strive to engage women specifically as agents of change, having a role in the decision-making process to ensure adaptation is effective for the whole community.

One way to enhance adaptation policies would be for the commissioning of research specific to gendered adaptation, looking at how women can best be engaged in adaptation policies so that they are beneficial for gender mainstreaming, a goal in and of itself, and to enhance their effectiveness, ensuring they do not lead to further marginalisation and take gender equity gains made in Australia in recent decades backward. The National Adaptation Research Facility would be well placed to take up this research.

## 2.5 Ecosystems

**Recommendation:** The health and vitality of ecosystems play a key role in protecting Australia from climate change impacts. Reparation and conservation of ecosystems needs to be a central part of adaptation, complementing community measures focusing on the well being of people. The interdependency of the earth requires both areas to be addressed for effective adaptation to occur. Methods to generate investments in the health of ecosystems should be explored.

Effective adaptation must maximise the resilience of both human communities and natural ecosystems and this demands wise management of natural resources. These resources and the health of ecosystems will come to play a role in buffering communities against scarcity and the extremes of climate as they become more adverse.

The 2007 IPCC report on Australia's vulnerability found the areas most at risk from climate change impacts that are inevitable are ecosystems, water security and coastal communities.<sup>10</sup> These were identified as having a narrow coping range; therefore protecting ecosystems must be a key component of adaptation strategies. Barriers that prevent the protection of ecosystems

<sup>7</sup> Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change; United Nations Development Program; 2009. Page 26.

[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/downloads/Resource\\_Guide\\_English\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/downloads/Resource_Guide_English_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Gender and Climate Change: Women as Agents of Change, 2007.

[http://www.iucn.org/media/materials/fact\\_sheets/?32/Gender-andclimate-change](http://www.iucn.org/media/materials/fact_sheets/?32/Gender-andclimate-change).

<sup>9</sup> Climate Change Policies in Australia: Gender Equality, Power and Knowledge. Thomas K Wanner, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology; 2009. <http://www.waset.org/journals/waset/v54/v54-148.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Hennessy, K., B. Fitzharris, B.C. Bates, N. Harvey, S.M. Howden, L. Hughes, J. Salinger and R. Warrick, 2007: Australia and New Zealand. Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 507-540.

must be removed, and this requires huge economic restructuring in addition to marked behaviour changes. There needs to be significant investment in the resilience of natural ecosystems and this will directly affect the adaptation requirements of communities. It was found in 2001 that to reach targets concerning sustainable resource use, an investment of \$65 billion over ten years was needed.<sup>11</sup> It cannot be up to the Government to fund this entirely; there must be private sector involvement. A report by Allens Consulting Group concerning private sector investment in ecosystem repair found that major barriers to private sector investment in environmental sustainability in 2001 were low returns, government red tape, limited markets for environment products and lack of availability and interest in environmental benefits and environmentally friendly products.<sup>12</sup> Though the price on pollution and increased awareness of the necessity of the environmental sustainability in the past ten years may have changed this situation slightly, the issue of investment in ecosystem resilience still bears consideration in climate change adaptation policy.

## 2.6 Economic Signals for the Private Sector

Effective adaptation is hindered greatly in a system which still encourages profit resulting from waste and unsustainable high emitting activities and industries. Facilitating adaptation requires each area of society to be prepared for the changes required to create a sustainable economy and society. Industry needs clear signals as to what adaptation and mitigation of climate change means for their future.

Fossil-fuel based economies such as Australia's have a long road ahead for economic transformation and that transformation should start immediately. Yet current investments in Australia's mining industry have hit record levels, with a reported increase of 34 per cent from April 2011 to the end of October 2011.<sup>13</sup> This means that throughout 2011, while the public has been debating a price on pollution and the Government exploring ways to limit pollution, there has been a huge burst in investment in the mining sector with hundreds of billions of dollars recently being placed into a record number of projects in development, either committed or under construction. There is projected to be *'significant growth in coal, iron ore and gas exports...over the medium and long term, underpinned by the capital investment occurring in these sectors'*.<sup>14</sup> The polluting industries of oil and gas, iron ore and coal are taking in record project investment, which will lock in global pollution for decades to come and prevent effective economic and community adaptation both in Australia and developing countries. This cannot continue and needs to be addressed through private sector integration into adaptation. Federal and state governments must prevent any further infrastructure for polluting industries to prevent locking in dangerous climate change for Australia and the rest of the world.

## 3. Conclusion

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<sup>11</sup> Repairing the Country: Leveraging Private Investment. The Allens Consulting Group. August 2001. [http://www.ecosystemservicesproject.org/html/publications/docs/Repairing\\_the\\_Country.pdf](http://www.ecosystemservicesproject.org/html/publications/docs/Repairing_the_Country.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Repairing the Country: Leveraging Private Investment. The Allens Consulting Group. August 2001. [http://www.ecosystemservicesproject.org/html/publications/docs/Repairing\\_the\\_Country.pdf](http://www.ecosystemservicesproject.org/html/publications/docs/Repairing_the_Country.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics, [http://bree.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/20111129-mining-major-projects.html](http://bree.gov.au/media/media_releases/20111129-mining-major-projects.html)

<sup>14</sup> Professor Quentin Grafton, Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics, [http://bree.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/20111129-mining-major-projects.html](http://bree.gov.au/media/media_releases/20111129-mining-major-projects.html)



Effective adaptation to climate change is possible in the Australian community, but requires policies that embrace the wide range of impacts and differing levels of vulnerability. To be most effective, adaptation must start with a clear understanding and acceptance of climate change and its impacts through clear communication, have net additional benefits to the community by increasing social inclusion with a focus on poverty reduction and increased support for the community services sector, be gendered and tailored to culturally diverse groups, contain elements of ecosystem conservation and reparation, contain clear signals for industry and the private sector and place some level of responsibility on their engagement with the issue.

Good Shepherd and other networks around the community services and welfare sector are concerned with the impact of climate change and adaptation strategies on the poor and vulnerable. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in sector consultation on effective adaptation strategies for the community. This sort of face to face consultation bringing together those concerned with this issue could benefit both the Productivity Commission in their inquiry and the community services sector in collaborative responses. Please feel free to contact Good Shepherd if this sort of consultation would be considered useful.

If designed effectively, adaptation measures can increase mitigation efforts and build community cohesion, offering further benefits in the required transition to a more sustainable, safer Australia.

Yours sincerely,

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