



YOUR REF:

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#3599554

6 June 2012

Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic 8003
Email: climate-adaptation@pc.gov.au

**RE: PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT - BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION**

The Cairns region is considered to be one of the most vulnerable regions in Australia to projected climate change impacts. As such, Cairns Regional Council has been dedicating resources to both climate change adaptation and mitigation over recent years. Council now has a Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan (2009), a Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Action Plan (2010) and a Climate Change Strategy (2010 - 2015).

As a coastal region in the tropics, our region is predicted to face increased intensity of cyclones and more damaging associated storm surge events; rising sea levels; longer, drier dry seasons; increased temperatures; and higher intensity rainfall and associated flooding. Due to our vulnerability to these impacts we are particularly interested in the dialogue relating to how levels of government work together to adapt to climate change.

We would like to offer the following feedback on the draft report *Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation*.

- We support the need for clarification of local, state and federal government roles relating to disaster management and land-use planning as outlined in the draft report.
- It is important to highlight that any delegation of further responsibilities to local government will need to be realistic given funding availability and may require additional state or federal funding.
- Lack of information is not a significant barrier to adaptation action within our Council however lack of local scale climate change impact data is.

- Fear of litigation is one of the main barriers to effective climate change adaptation at the local level. We strongly support the statement that “*legal liability concerns are hindering adaptation for many local governments*”. For example, uncertainty around whether state governments will accept legal liability for local government decisions to refuse development applications in high risk coastal areas increases the risk factor for Council, and is a barrier to effective adaptation.
- To resolve this problem, we agree that state governments need to clarify the legal liability of councils and identify processes to manage that liability.
- Limited funding is definitely a barrier to effective climate change adaptation in our region. Increased state or federal funding would allow more effective adaptation action on the ground.
- We would also like to highlight the importance of allowing and encouraging local governments to develop local solutions through statutory tools such as planning schemes. Planning schemes are an important tool for shaping the future of a community and can include both climate change adaptation measures (avoiding development in high risk areas; planning for community resilience etc.) and climate change mitigation measures (energy efficiency etc.). A current barrier to embedding local solutions in planning schemes is state government restrictions on what can be included in these documents. For example, the Queensland Government is currently not allowing local governments to include in planning schemes any codes relating to energy or water efficiency in buildings. This is of particular concern for our region given that state regulations relating to energy efficiency in buildings have been developed for a different climate and are ineffective when applied to buildings in our tropical climate. Local governments should be encouraged to develop and implement local solutions for climate change adaptation which are suited to the local environment and enhance community resilience.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in this draft report.

Yours faithfully

Peter Boyd

Manager Planning Strategies