



FloodSax Australia PTY LTD
25 Brunswick Road
East Brunswick 3057
Victoria
Tel: +61 3 9380 7850

info@floodsax.com.au
www.floodsax.com.au

Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaption
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins St
Melbourne

Re: Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaption

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of FloodSax Australia I welcome the opportunity to submit our views on the identification and removal of barriers to effective climate change adaption

FloodSax' role in responding to climate adaption challenges is as a provider of innovative products that offer a way to avoid or mitigate some of the impacts of climate and weather events.

We specifically provide 'preventative' options for those in the community that are most susceptible to the hazards floods pose as well a solution for 'flash flooding' events where the ability to provide warning to people is limited and equipment is required on hand ready to be used at a moments notice.

About Us

The Brotherhood of St Laurence introduced FloodSax into Australia in 2010, like many organisations the Brotherhood is campaigning to ensure low income and disadvantaged Australians are protected from the effects of climate change.

The Social Enterprise Division of the Brotherhood became involved in this through findings from the Brotherhood's Research and Policy Centre as well as information from the Attorney – Generals document (Manual 20) on 'Flood Preparedness.' (6)

Emergency management specialists outline the following groups as most susceptible to the hazards floods pose:

- The elderly
- The poor
- Single parent families, large families or families with very young children
- Those lacking access to a motor vehicle
- The ill or infirm
- Members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

FloodSax were seen as a quick labor free solution for unpredicted extreme weather events and for those members of the community unable to negotiate the task of filling, collecting and managing traditional sand bags.

Over the last 2 years we have worked closely with councils and emergency service personnel to ensure Floodsax was seen as only one component of a total home or business emergency plan. We have set up a retail distribution network and worked with Insurance companies, the risk management sector and individual segments within in customer base.

Introduction

There are several issues of concern that will be the focus of our submission:

- Managing the distributional impacts of climate change for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
- Correcting market failures (for example, by arranging for the provision of public goods such as information and disaster-mitigation infrastructure) where the benefits to the community exceed the costs
- Improving the balance between prevention, preparedness, response and recovery
- New approaches may be needed to manage climate change risks to existing settlements

Response

During our program of work with disadvantaged groups it was the elderly who we have seen as the most vulnerable. (1)

Taking the 'real option' approach with todays current climate of which experts are predicting the possibility of 20 - 30 years of repeated, frequent or enhanced La Nina's (2) and combining this with the ageing population of 7,199.582 (3) means without prioritization this group could be disproportionately impacted.

A recent report published by APIA insurance highlights the financial stress the elderly are already facing. (4) Australia's over 50's are looking at a combined repair bill of \$5.57 billion to fix the more than 17 million defects in their homes. The most common issues were leaking taps (41%) trees that needed to be trimmed for safety reasons (39%) and blocked drains (27%). There is already a potential home safety crisis on the horizon without adding more frequent and more intense extreme weather events.

These are pressures on the existing social safety net and as evidenced by the inability of the elderly to maintain their homes now they do not have the means to cater for future disaster events.

Mechanisms over and above the existing flood mitigation infrastructure currently being used for preventative measures will need to be made available.

Existing flood prevention measures have focused on 'macro' infrastructure such as levees for riverine flooding, of course this is extremely important and successful as demonstrated by Charleville, Lismore and Wagga however with the frequency of urban flash flooding and storm damage in some instances the onus on mitigation and prevention needs to be localized to each home and business as well.

Over the last 24 months there have been many instances of intense rainfall damaging homes, businesses and main streets within 15 – 20 minutes of the initial onset, over floor water levels in many occasions were less than six inches high.

Flash floods are often sudden and unexpected and are characterized by their short warning time frames, short duration, and often-dangerous floodwaters, which can cause severe damage. Flash flooding, which is often defined as flooding which peaks within six hours of the rain which causes it typically results from relatively short, intense bursts of rainfall, often from thunderstorms. Generally, such flooding is of short duration. (6)

The ability to provide warning to people likely to be affected by flash flooding is limited.

Having an easy to use lightweight flood mitigation device on hand ready to use (by residents, business owners or Emergency Services) at a moments notice would have minimized water damage in many of these instances.

Devices such as FloodSax can be used 'generically' to mitigate the affects of any water-based damage such as floods, storms, leaks, broken pipes and spills. Unlike other 'rigid' devices FloodSax can be placed in doorways, on the floor, in ceiling cavities or under sinks, troughs and just about anywhere. Their super absorbency enables most water accidents to be dealt with immediately.

More work is required on identifying how residents and businesses could be encouraged to better prepare themselves for extreme weather events.

Options could be the provision of a ‘ Safety Rebate ’ for residents and businesses that purchase flood/storm mitigation devices to protect their properties.

The Western Australian Government have a rebate scheme for seniors who purchase security and fire safety products: (5)

As a WA Seniors Card holder, you can claim a rebate of up to \$200 per household towards buying and/or installing eligible home security devices whether you own or rent your home. A further \$200 per household is available for the purchase and installation of electrical and fire safety items.

A rebate scheme is only one option; the [HACC Program](#) is a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory initiative. It funds basic maintenance and support services to help the elderly and younger people with disabilities to continue living in their community. By providing a lightweight flood mitigation device before the event to participants in the HACC program could potentially free up time and resources for emergency services personal during busy times as well as assisting HACC members to be more self sufficient and resilient in protecting themselves and their belongings.

This could potentially assist in striking the right balance between preventing and preparing for disasters on the one hand, and responding to and recovering from them on the other.

Our next step is for this adaption spending to be measured, the team at Climate Risk have developed a web based building assessment tool that creates a simple rating for resilience of a domestic building which is context sensitive.

This will compare the effectiveness of increasing resilience requirements for a domestic property versus increased spending on larger scale public protective infrastructure.

Grantley Reed

Director

FloodSax Australia PTY LTD

(1) “ I am a disability pensioner living in a Housing commission unit on the flood plain near the Merri Creek which floods often these days. I am worried that in one of these major downpours I will get flooded”. “I have heard about the FloodSax, which you are distributing”. “I see the price is \$60 for a home pack”. “I am wondering if you offer any discount or subsidy for people in my financial circumstances”? “If not is it possible to do some bartering in exchange for a pack”. “I am willing to perhaps do a donation of things I can spare to your Op shops in exchange”. Thanks for your consideration.
(Name and address removed for this article)

“I am an elderly lady and have gone through the council process of collecting sandbags and found the ordeal very difficult”. “ I bought a home pack of FloodSax last year and was amazed at how they work and how it has saved me on several occasions from water damage caused by heavy rain”. “I highly recommend FloodSax for people who have trouble with traditional sandbags.”
(Brisbane resident - Name and address removed for this article)

(2) <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/la-nina-here-for-decades/story-e6frg6nf-1225987421955>
– 08/06/2012

(3) <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf//DetailsPage/3101.0Sep%202011?OpenDocument>
-08/06/2012

(4) <http://www.apia.com.au/apia/third-over-50s-cant-afford-home-repair-bill>
-08/06/2012

(5)<http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/serviceareas/seniorscard/governmentconcessions/safetyandsecurityrebate/Pages/default.aspx>
08/06/2012

(6)<http://www.em.gov.au/Publications/Australianemergencymanualseries/Pages/default.aspx>
08/06/2012