

## Popular Scientific Summary

### Integrating Place Attachment into Local Government Climate Change Adaptation: Barriers and Implications for Equity

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*Climate change is threatening the important places where we live, our community well-being, and connections to these places. How can we make our climate responses fairer for everyone in the community?*

As the climate changes so too can the places that we love and value, as well as our attachment to these places, leading to feelings of loss, fear and grief. For instance, sea level rise can erode coastlines, or wildfires can destroy communities and biodiversity, stopping us from being able to visit these areas, or in more extreme cases, leading to the loss of lives, homes and livelihoods. But we are responding, with local governments often leading the way. Climate change adaptation refers to the actions that seek to help us prepare for and adjust to impacts of climate change so that people, our environment and our economy are protected. Within these responses are a myriad of decisions that need to be made, and these choices do not happen in a vacuum. Key to making fair and equitable CCA decisions require acknowledgement, understanding and consideration of what the community values so that they can be adequately considered within these processes.

This thesis looks at how practitioners in local government in Australia consider place attachment and what the community values when designing and implementing climate change adaptation projects. There is a magnitude of positive work being undertaken and these passionate practitioners recognise that their communities are diverse, with equally diverse opinions, needs and values and that adaptation responses should involve the community in decisions. Climate change practitioners act as technical experts, requiring them to advise, persuade and embed action at all levels of the organisation. This comes with a level of power and influence in how climate change is framed, including how problems are defined and what action is recommended. Place attachment was found to be understood most prominently in reference to the impact of disasters and extreme weather events that had occurred recently bringing climate change issues to the fore. It was found that these emotional connections can change people's behaviour and could be used as a tool to catalyse community action. Attachment to place and emotional connections could be leveraged in conversations about shared values with the community, only if community engagement practises are inclusive of the diversity that exists in the community. Without inclusive engagement practices, decision-makers will not be in a position to adequately understand, consider or integrate what the community values and how they relate to their important places and how these places might be impacted by climate change. Climate change adaptation work is being undertaken in a constrained system leading to responses that are ad-hoc and not integrated across the organisation. The research identified several barriers that practitioners face when trying to run adaptation programmes and when trying to influence the decisions being made by their Councils. These challenges constrain the effectiveness of this work and act to stifle the passion of climate change practitioners over time. It is important for those responsible for climate change adaptation to look to ensure that the decisions that they make consider the distribution of the benefits and consequences on those affected by climate-related issues. Consideration of place attachment and community values in climate change adaptation can help to facilitate fairness and equity by ensuring that decision-making is democratic, participatory and inclusive.