

AdaptWest – Report to WACRA General Meeting 29 July 2015

At our last meeting, I reported on a letter sent by WACRA to Verity Sanders, coordinator of the AdaptWest initiative, expressing our concerns about the minimal focus given to residential dwellings within some very lengthy reports on the problems confronting the Western suburbs of Adelaide due to climate change.

Just to recap, action on climate change can be divided into two broad categories, **mitigation** and **adaptation**. Mitigation is the things that can be done to reduce greenhouse gases and so limit such things as global warming and rising sea levels. Adaptation is the things that can be done to limit the adverse effects caused by climate change. AdaptWest is an initiative of the West Torrens, Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield Councils, in conjunction with the State and Federal Governments, set up to find ways for businesses, communities and the environment to respond to the challenges of climate change.

Globally, climate scientists have recognised that the best decisions on adaptation are likely to be made when local communities are involved in the process and the decision making. AdaptWest is the body charged in our area with assessing vulnerability to climate change, determining adaptive capacity and making recommendations for action. Part of this process has been the conduction of workshops with relevant stakeholders over the five themes of *Planning and Development; Environment and Open Space; Coastal Management; Social and Community Resilience and Health; and Assets, Infrastructure and Economy*.

Over the past eighteen months, several WACRA members have participated in these workshops as community representatives among the stakeholders. In reports that followed from these workshops it was a bit concerning to find community representation listed as number nine of nine among the groups of stakeholders, just behind developers. Perhaps this is why the vulnerability assessment of domestic dwellings appears to have been almost overlooked in documents that run into the hundreds of pages. By way of redressing this omission, WACRA wrote a letter to Verity Sanders who acknowledged that our concerns had merit and passed our letter on to Fiona Jenkins, Coordinator Waste and Sustainability at the City of Charles Sturt, for a response. We now have that response which will shortly be posted on our website together with links to the AdaptWest reports and other related sites.

Important points to emerge from Fiona's letter are:

1. There is recognition that during Stage one of the AdaptWest project there was insufficient focus on residential dwellings and their inhabitants.
2. Charles Sturt Council has requested to the consultants that residential dwellings be given 'careful consideration' as the project moves forward. (This has been independently acknowledged by Verity Sanders at AdaptWest.)
3. There has been recognition that for the majority of stakeholders in our region their home is their most important asset and that concerns about

- the vulnerability of their homes is amplified among those with limited financial means and those living with mental or physical challenges.
4. WACRA's suggestion that an education program advising residents on practical steps that they can take to protect their dwellings from the effects of climate change will be incorporated into future plans.
 5. Questions relating to insurance and compensation for privately owned residential dwellings will be addressed.

David Schofield

Websites

1. [LGA report on the sea level rise problem in South Australia](#)
2. [Results from AdaptWest Workshops including the Stage One report](#)
(Charles Sturt Council website)