



Council of Social Service of NSW
NCOSS
66 Albion St
Surry Hills NSW

19 January 2010

Dr David Ugalde
A/Research Manager
National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility
Griffith University
Gold Coast Campus
Queensland 4222

cc. Daniel Stock, Research Coordinator, d.stock@griffith.edu.au

Dear Mr. Ugalde,

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Plan: Social, Economic and Institutional Dimensions – Consultation Draft.

This submission is made on behalf of the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS), the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TASCOSS) and the West Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS).

NCOSS, TASCOSS and WACOSS are part of a broader COSS Network, and are peak bodies representing the needs and interests of service providers and their clients in the non-profit social service sector.

About NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) provides independent and informed policy development, advice and review and plays a key coordination and leadership role for the non government social and community services sector in New South Wales. NCOSS works with our members, the sector, the NSW Government and its departments and other relevant agencies on current and emerging (and ongoing) social, systemic and operational issues.

NCOSS has a vision for a society where there is social and economic equity, based on co-operation, participation, sustainability and respect.

About TASCROSS

TASCROSS is the peak body for the Tasmanian community services sector. Its membership comprises individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TASCROSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, regulators, the media, and the public.

About WACOSS

The Western Australian Council of Social Service Incorporated (WACOSS) is the peak body of the community services sector across Western Australia. Since 1956, WACOSS has been developing and strengthening the non-government community services sector's capacity to assist all Western Australians. With over 350 members, WACOSS has strong relationships with the community services sector and seeks to represent their interests, and those of the disadvantaged individuals and families they assist at a service level. Given this relationship, WACOSS is in a unique position to comment on issues in our society that socially impact upon disadvantaged members of the community.

About the Research Plan

Overall NCOSS, TASCROSS and WACOSS support the discussions and recommendations for research in the Consultation Draft. They are particularly pleased to see the focus on vulnerability to climate change and equity in access to and application of adaptation measures. Often policy solutions to the impact of climate change are developed without clear thought as to the impact of these solutions on socio-economically disadvantaged and vulnerable people. This is particularly so in terms of the economic costs of adapting to climate change, which have to be balanced against other financial pressures that people face.

NCOSS, TASCROSS and WACOSS also support the high priority research topics as identified in the paper.

NCOSS, TASCROSS and WACOSS have the following comments to make about some of the research topics proposed in the Consultation Draft:

- ***Research Topic 6:*** (a) 'the knowledge and perceptions of people and groups about climate groups' - we would like to see included how people weigh the risks of climate change against other risks they face in their life and how this impacts on their thinking about adaptation to climate change. For example if you are struggling to pay bills and afford food, what impact will this have on your decision to adapt to climate change, even though you may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
- ***Research Topic 7:*** (d) 'economic barriers, including distribution of capital and investment' – while this topic is specifically about collective action, we would like to see some consideration of individual economic barriers and how this may prevent people from taking collective action.
- ***Research Topic 10:*** 'Evaluation of the costs. Valuing the relative costs of adaptation strategies and the avoided damages for different sectors of human activity and welfare, and for the natural environment' – a key focus here should be

those groups that are the most vulnerable. For example people with disability, young people, homeless people, older people, people with chronic health issues, socio-economically disadvantaged and the working poor. (We acknowledge that a separate document on research on the impact of climate change on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is being developed).

- **Research Topic 13:** 'Understanding the factors that facilitate or impede inclusion or integration of climate adaptation considerations and priorities into policy and planning' – this should include both economic/fiscal and social policy
- **Research Topic 14:** 'Assessing the potential for, and limits to, market-based adaptation measures, including insurance markets' – this should include the potential impacts of these types of strategies on the most disadvantaged, especially in the area of affordability.

NCOSS, TASCROSS and WACOSS also agree that it is essential that the needs of research end-users are taken into account in the early design of research priorities and actively supports the engagement of key stakeholders in defining the research questions to be addressed. However it is essential that the most disadvantaged are engaged in this process. We acknowledge that these groups can be difficult to engage but ongoing exclusion of them from these types of discussions has resulted in their needs often being over-looked or recommendations that cannot be achieved.

Once again we thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to seeing the research commence.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Samantha Edmonds, Deputy Director Policy and Communications (NCOSS) on (02) 9211 2599 ext 111 or samantha@ncoss.org.au

Yours sincerely

Alison Peters
Director
NCOSS
(on behalf of NCOSS, TASCROSS and WACOSS)