

Garnaut Review –General Submission

Theme- A key focus for Australia now must be climate change management planning with a core focus on immediate assistance with risk assessment, adaptation planning, and subsequent risk mitigation implementation projects for nations within the Pacific region.

Preamble

Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) announced in its Fourth Assessment Report that “Warming of the Climate system is unequivocal, as it is now evident from observations in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising average sea level.”

Whether you believe or do not believe that human activity is the main cause of climate change is not the immediate concern. The real issue is that warming of our climate system is occurring at a rapid rate now. As a result we must focus substantial resources on planning and adaptation solutions to mitigate the risk effects being and going to be realised by warming of the climate system. We must move to the next stage. A first step is to achieve a clearer understanding of the current climate risk situation in our region. Additionally, we need to agree on what the key metrics are that we need to be concerned about and communicate them in a way that all persons will understand not just the scientific community.

Climate change is currently impacting countries especially in Australia’s backyard-The Pacific region. It must be Australia’s responsibility to assist in meeting current needs and in adaptation planning for these regions if it is to fulfil its goal to be the climate change leader in the region. Australia needs to work closely with our stakeholders in the Pacific region and engage with them in design and implementation of risk management planning and ongoing research agenda’s.

I propose the following two recommendation’s as a starting point as part of a climate change management plan for the Pacific region-

1-Theme: Standard scale for climate change impact assessment

Recommendation: A clear and uniform assessment method for assessing current and forecast climate change impact by nation and regions within the Pacific be designed and implemented.

A distinct and uniform assessment method scale (eg Beaufort Scale for wind strength, Richter Scale for earthquakes size) of climate change impact will assist with climate change related risk management planning and adaptation resource planning in the Pacific region. The scale assessment results will provide for a clear and consistent understanding of the status of current and forecast climate change impacts for a region or nation. This approach could effectively guide policymakers in planning and implementation of relevant responses to climate change risks in the Pacific region.

2-Theme: Improved communication and visibility of key climate change metrics and projects

Recommendation: I recommend that a centralised communication channel be established by the Australian government which provides visibility on key metrics and projects related to climate change in the Pacific region.

An Australian government managed Internet site providing centralised visibility of key performance indicators for climate change should be established. This is a site whereby all citizens could access to understand the current situation and how their region and the surrounding regions are being impacted by climate change. The content and key metrics should be presented in simplified form which would be understandable by the general public. We have successfully achieved this with a key performance indicator- current water levels in Australia’s dams and there is no reason we cannot do it with climate change metrics in a

more holistic manner. The assessment results from recommendation 1 mentioned above could be published via this channel. I believe it would be highly successful in standardising understanding and discussion of climate change impacts and effects amongst all interested stakeholders and citizens of the Pacific region.

I also believe that clearer visibility of which governments and organisations are providing funding for which projects related to climate change planning and risk mitigation in the Pacific region should be communicated via this centralised channel.

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