

Hypothetical: Climate change & accelerating sea level rise - long term response

**Wednesday, 19th September
1.50pm – 2.20pm
Auditorium, Civic Centre**

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Background

Long term sea level is projected to continue rising for several centuries even with effective greenhouse abatement.

Consistent government and community organisation presents many problems as current systems generally consider shorter periods of years to decades rather than centuries.

Legislative and common law has maintained an organised system for long periods but is presently not in a position to provide a coherent framework for long term policy implementation on sea level rise.

Discussion

Regardless of any reduction strategies - even when emissions of greenhouse gas are reduced - sea level will continue to rise for centuries due to time lags in the ocean-atmosphere system and the slow warming process of deep ocean basins. We are committed to long term sea level rise.

The influence of rising sea level, possibly at an accelerating rate, will result in the coastline moving inland. This is shown by all indicators and demonstrated over the last century by accurate surveys.

The moving coastline has breached seaward meander bends of coastal rivers and waterbodies, resulting in permanent openings and formation of barrier islands. Freshwater lakes formed behind dune barriers during the late Holocene have also been breached.

Questions

What type of institutional system should we be considering to adequately deal with long term management of coastal land?

How would such a system be integrated with present legislation, common law, planning, real estate markets, property security (for mortgage) and insurance?