Climate Change Adaptation Research Grants Program
- Social, Economic and Institutional Dimensions Projects

Project title:
Rental housing, climate change and adaptive capacity: a case study of Newcastle, NSW.

Principal investigators: Dr Lesley Instone
Lead organisation: University of Newcastle

Objectives:
1. To employ an asset-based approach to climate change resilience in the rental housing sector in Newcastle, NSW
2. To identify the adaptive capacity of tenants to respond to climate change
3. To identify the adaptive capacity of housing managers (private and public) and landlords to respond to the challenge of climate change in the rental housing sector
4. To link the capacities of tenants and housing managers/landlords to adapt to climate change
5. To identify productive entry-points for interventions which enhance adaption responses in the rental housing sector.

Project design and methods:
The project will utilise an Asset-Based methodology involving collecting stories of the adaptation and barriers to adaptation of key actors (tenants and housing managers/landlords) and bring key actors together to build capacity and devise more effective strategies for adaptation (*objective 1*). The research will be conducted in 2 sites in Newcastle, NSW, a coastal location expected to confront significant problems caused by sea-level rise and increased storm and flood activity due to climate change. The urban locality of Newcastle, based on the Local Government Areas of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, has a population of nearly 300,000 people and over 20,000 public and private rental properties. As such it is sufficiently large to contain a range of tenancy types and relationships comparable to other Australian cities, while remaining a manageable research site. The two case study sites selected represent 2 important aspects of the adaptive vulnerability of Newcastle housing. Site 1, Inner-Urban Newcastle contains a significant amount of low-income, medium-density rental properties potentially under flood risk due to climate change. Site 2, the Toronto district of Lake Macquarie contains low income, low-density housing properties in the vicinity of the lake. The physical assets represented by the housing stock of these two locations - houses, terraces and flats – are indicative of most housing assets in Australian cities. These case studies therefore allow insights into the possibilities for adaptation elsewhere in Australia.

The research techniques are qualitative: interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 20 renters from each tenure type in each location (80 interviews in all meeting *objective 2*). 30 semi-structured interviews will be conducted with housing managers/landlords, comprising 10 real estate agents or private rental property managers/landlords in each location and 10 interviews with Housing NSW staff (*objective 3*). During the interviews tenants will be invited to film their current adaptation strategies. These videos will be used to compile You-Tube clips (a key deliverable) and will be used as stimulus material for focus groups. During the interview process tenants and housing managers/landlords will be invited to participate in focus groups to address barriers to action (*objective 4*). Interview and focus group material will be transcribed in full, provided to participants on request, and analysed using NVivo. Analysis of the transcripts of interviews and focus groups will be used to identify entry-points for intervention which could inform ongoing action elsewhere in Australia (*objective 5*).