



Snapshot

Barriers to adaptation action: a perspective from decision-makers

Summary

An analysis of submissions during the preparation of the Productivity Commission's 2012 report "Barriers to Effective Adaptation" reveals some interesting findings about barriers to adaptation as seen from the perspective of decision-makers.

Keywords

Barriers to adaptation, decision-makers

In 2012, the Productivity Commission produced the report "Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation". As part of the writing process, the Commission invited submissions from interested parties. Over 800 pages of submissions were received, from companies, industries and professional associations, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and individuals.

These submissions have been analysed to understand how different actors understand and experience barriers to adaptation and how they view the relative importance of these barriers in the context of the report (Waters et al. 2014).

Fifty distinct barriers were identified, which fall into five types:

- governance
- policy
- psychosocial
- resources
- information.

A full list is given in Table 1. Overall respondents, governance and policy barriers emerged as the most important. However, different respondent groups highlighted different barriers as most important. For example:

- Local government respondents identified governance (lack of leadership), specific policy issues (especially the risk of legal challenges) and psychosocial barriers (perceived apathy and denial in their community) as important.
- Industry and professional associations were most concerned about governance – disruption to business operations arising from changing policy regimes and inconsistencies across jurisdictional boundaries. They also identified lack of capacity to understand and evaluate the information available from multiple sources, and lack of tools and techniques to translate information into decisions.

- Community organisations were the only group to identify lack of resources as a major barrier. They also mentioned lack of targeted information, lack of skills, and policy barriers.

Waters, E., J. Barnett, and A. Puleston, 2014: Contrasting perspectives on barriers to adaptation in Australian climate policy. *Climatic Change*, **124**, 691–702.

References

Productivity Commission, 2012: Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation, *Report No. 59*, Final Inquiry Report, Canberra.

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Table 1: Fifty distinct barriers to adaptation, grouped by type (Source: Waters et al. 2014).

Governance	Policy	Information	Resources	Psychosocial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities across levels of government A lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities between the public and private sector A lack of leadership at state and federal levels A lack of leadership from organisations and business A lack of coordination among arms of government Competing demands between the public and private sectors A mismatch between the time horizons for adaptation and political and management practices Inconsistency in standards and policies across jurisdictions Difficulties in trade offs between policy priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clarity on liability for decision making Lack of certainty around compensation and injurious affection Weak planning legislation unable to control development Lack of uniformity in building regulations The focus on mitigation has been a barrier to accepting adaptation Regulation comes before appropriate technology Insurance policies are unclear Taxes on insurance products A focus on disaster recovery rather than disaster prevention A lack of consideration of equity in current policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty about climate impacts A lack of data at local and regional scales A lack of confidence in climate change projections at a local level A lack of knowledge on implementation A lack of support for interpretation of data Uncertainty about appropriate planning tools and methodologies A lack of research focusing on adaptation A reliance on historical data and experience Information not directed at specific audiences Information is not relevant to many people A lack of standards for interpreting data reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of staffing, skills and expertise—particularly in local government The cost of implementing adaptation actions A lack of access to funding Local governments constrained in their ability to raise revenue The capital costs of engineering solutions Constraints on the efficient use of capital for adaptation A lack of targeted funding to vulnerable groups and areas Increasing cost of doing business due to climate change policies Low returns and limited markets for investment in adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of a lack of efficacy Public disbelief in the science of climate change The contestability of climate change, which creates a 'mandate barrier' The tendency of people to discount future benefits An emphasis on the individual rather than community A lack of public understanding about levels of risk that they face Cultural resistance to change The adversarial nature of Australian politics The 'desirability' of living in high risk areas Apathy and issue fatigue A fear of the unknown, resulting in denial



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