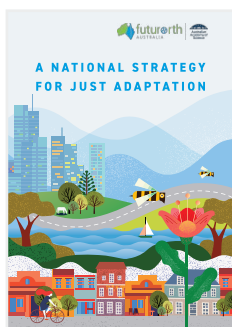


A National Strategy for Just Adaptation



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It is a core responsibility of emergency managers to support people, communities and organisations in adapting to the risks and challenges threatened by weather-generated hazards that accompany climate change. In Australia, national strategies for disaster resilience and climate adaptation, provide an existing structure and guide for these activities. *Just Adaptation* examines the flaws and successes of what it calls these conventional approaches to climate change adaptation.

Coming together after the Reimagining Climate Adaptation Summit held in 2021, the researchers of Future Earth Australia at the Australian Academy of Science, brought together an expert working group from diverse backgrounds to re-examine adaptation strategy. In common with many practitioners and researchers, they identified the structural problems in our society that sustain inequality and inequity in peoples' capacities to adapt to climate change and to reduce disaster risk. They have written this guide as a complementary strategy that confronts the problems of social justice issues of adaptation.

In a sense, this is not a conventional book. It strongly resembles the format of the national strategies that it critiques and, as it is written under group authorship, it inevitably tends towards the style of government documents. Although a valuable contribution to the pursuit of social justice, it is quite dense in places as a consequence of the academic language used. The report lacks the passion that may be brought by an individual when writing about the unavoidable hazard risks caused by injustice, inequity and disadvantage.

The authors address the vulnerability of social justice inequity and cite details of the negative outcomes of inequality and disadvantage on communities and groups as they face the unequal task of adapting to climate change and its associated hazards. The report does not give much space to defining exactly what is meant by 'just adaptation' but this problem of poor definition is identified by others.

The working group focuses on practical strategies that they identify as building blocks. These form the structure of the report: 'Practising recognition of all Peoples and their Knowledge, Fostering Inclusion of Communities Experiencing

Marginalisation, Addressing Ongoing Injustices, Overcoming Barriers and Acknowledging Limits and Transforming for Just Adaptation'. These in turn generate a further 5 priority reform areas that are incorporated into each of the building blocks. They are empowering Indigenous leadership, embedding a just adaptation framework across governments and sectors, including the voices and experiences of diverse stakeholders across areas of marginalisation into just adaptation processes, supporting communities and community groups to drive transformation, and advancing research agendas that promote just adaptation.

Significantly, it is the structural nature of social injustice and vulnerability that makes the vulnerable characteristics of people and communities things over which they have no control. This led the emergency management sector to focus on a resilience strategy that builds on the strengths and capacities of people. Resilience is not social justice, but it is a more practical strategy for adaptation.

For example, a focus on urban issues identifies the problem of low-cost housing being sited on flood plains, the urban heat-island affect on heatwaves as well as a lack of public housing availability and the poor quality of housing available.

Planners and local governments, despite constraints, have long been committed to social justice and tackle these justice issues. Many professionals have already been working towards social justice in our settlements and in disaster risk reduction. However, this report is well motivated and hopefully might support all who strive for a fairer and just society as we face the reality of adapting to climate change.

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