

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



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## Preparing coastal regional communities for changes in the marine environment

Coastal regional communities will be given a helping hand to adapt to changes in the marine environment with a new research project.

The project is titled *A climate change adaptation blueprint for coastal regional communities*.

Researchers from the University of Tasmania, Murdoch University and CSIRO are to visit and study the consequences of change in St Helens in Tasmania, Geraldton in Western Australia and Bowen in Queensland.

Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Stewart Frusher, from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), said researchers will travel to each town to identify what changes are already occurring, as well as those that might occur in the future.

“Marine-dependent sectors contribute to the economic wellbeing of communities and impact the way the community operates.

“Industries such as commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, aquaculture, fish processing, transport and other associated industries may be affected by changes to nearby marine ecosystems.

“Consequently, coastal communities are expected to be significantly affected by marine-related changes,” Prof Frusher said.

Prof Frusher said they would like to gather information from people working in local industries, as well as general community members to develop a comprehensive picture of the contribution and flow-on effects of marine industries to the local economy and social fabric of the community.

“We’re interested in finding out about changes people have observed in their local community and how it has affected them,” he said.

“We’re also interested in what community members expect will change in the future, and to identify ways to both benefit from opportunities and deal with threats in the context of climate change.”

Data collection will occur in St Helens from mid-February to mid-March and researchers would like to speak to a broad range of people from fishers, to those working in related industries, local government workers as well as community members interested in the future wellbeing of the community, local industries, climate and science.

“Those interested are encouraged to meet with the researchers to share their opinions on the various subjects,” Prof Frusher said.

The key aim of the project is to develop tools to identify risks to the community and increase the capacity to cope with and benefit from change in coastal communities. The researchers will spend an extended period of time in each community to make sure everyone gets a chance to have their say.

“The research will enable industries, governing bodies and individuals to make informed decisions based on the best information available so as to maximise opportunities for the future,” he said.

This study has been funded by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Anyone living in the designated coastal communities who wants to be involved should contact their local Oceanwatch representative: Ms Anita Paulsen (6224 2890, 0407 135 637), or the researchers Dr Ingrid van Putten (6232 5048) or Dr Sarah Metcalf (08 9360 7833) to register their interest.

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