

MEDIA RELEASE

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS experts survey storm damage: 'Small jabs, then KO blow'

University of Tasmania researchers specialising in rising sea-levels and climate change have today surveyed the waterfront damage at Lauderdale caused by the weekend's wild weather.

Chris Sharples, a member of a School of Geography and Environmental Studies team analysing the vulnerability of Tasmania's coastline, and storm surge expert Dr John Hunter of the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems CRC, surveyed Roches Beach, where a clean-up is continuing after houses were flooded.

Mr Sharples, the author of a 2006 report commissioned by the Department of Primary Industries and Water, which outlined the vulnerability of the Tasmanian coastline to the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, is a member of the School of Geography and Environmental Studies' Blue Wren group.

Blue Wren has analysed Tasmania's coastline in an effort to understand its value to local communities and find ways for individuals to protect their area from rising sea levels.

Blue Wren's Dr Richard Mount said yesterday that while the rise in sea levels was incremental and relatively small to date, some of the beaches in south-east Tasmania are vulnerable, in particular the more sheltered beaches.

"What's happened at Lauderdale is like a series of small jabs by the rise in sea level, followed by a knockout blow in the form of the weekend's wild weather," he said.

The Blue Wren research has been looking at ways to identify which shores are more likely to erode and predict where water will flow into as the sea level rises in other areas of Tasmania as well.

"Sea level rise is happening," he said. "The overall impact at the moment isn't large but it will catch up."

The impact is not restricted to the physical – there will be social and economic implications as well.

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