



## **From Communicate to Educate – how a project structure and philosophy leads to engagement that influences organisational behaviours and decision making**

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Climate Futures for Tasmania is an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration of twelve core participating partners (both national and state organisations) who are contributing more than \$7.5 million in cash and in-kind over the three-year life of the project. The project is led by the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre at the University of Tasmania, with significant contributions by CSIRO, Australia's national research organisation, Tasmania's major power generation company, Hydro Tasmania and the Tasmanian State government, through the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment. The coordination, community interaction and management of the project are unique within the university environment. The project has required multiple levels of engagement to achieve end-user driven research that delivers highly practical and usable outcomes to stakeholders who are relatively new to climate change concepts.

The project is generating new information on climate change in the 21st century for local communities in Tasmania, by dynamically downscaling global climate models. It focuses on the information interests of Tasmanian communities, businesses, industries and governments through analysis of general climate, agriculture, water and catchments, and extreme events. We are engaging with more than 50 end user organisations and to date have been involved in more than 700 engagement activities.

The governance structure provides purpose to our stakeholders and given us opportunity to communicate and educate. From this opportunity has come invites and introductions to take our science further into the stakeholders' organisations and to new organisations. From these invites and introductions has come new partnerships and more opportunity to educate and influence organisational behaviour.

Our approach to engagement and communication fosters a learning environment that encompasses adult education principles. We have structured our formal and informal engagement activities to encourage active involvement, thus learning. We are providing early preliminary results and tailored products for our end-users to 'trial' and learn along the way. As we have struggled with difficult climate change science decisions, we have asked our stakeholders to be involved and develop the solution with us.

We have actively avoided the traditional information transfer approach of one-size fits all with regards to activities and products. We sit with our stakeholders, listen to what their information needs are, understand how their organisation works and functions, and involve them. Our stakeholders inform, guide and drive our research and the engagement activities. We go to their board rooms, their offices, their paddocks. Our engagement activities are as much about us learning from them, as it is us 'teaching' them about climate science. It has been highly effective to start an educational journey with them from the beginning of our research, rather than deliver challenging concepts and conclusions at the end.

The key element of our communication and education strategy has been continual engagement with relevant state and national government departments, and other major stakeholders. This ongoing engagement

introduces critical and often hard-to-understand climate science concepts to stakeholders early in the project, thus allowing such concepts to become familiar over the length of the project. This strategy ensures that in the conclusive reporting stage, our stakeholders are well-versed in the language and concepts necessary to engage with the conclusions, and consequently change behaviours. Our stakeholders have become advocates for our research and climate change science. Early engagement has encouraged a sense of ownership and familiarity of the climate science. This is crucial in the climate change space, where results can be controversial, difficult to appreciate and often ignored. What has been clearly important and successful has been providing the right information, at the right time, to the right people.