Integrating climate change risk into local government planning and decision-making
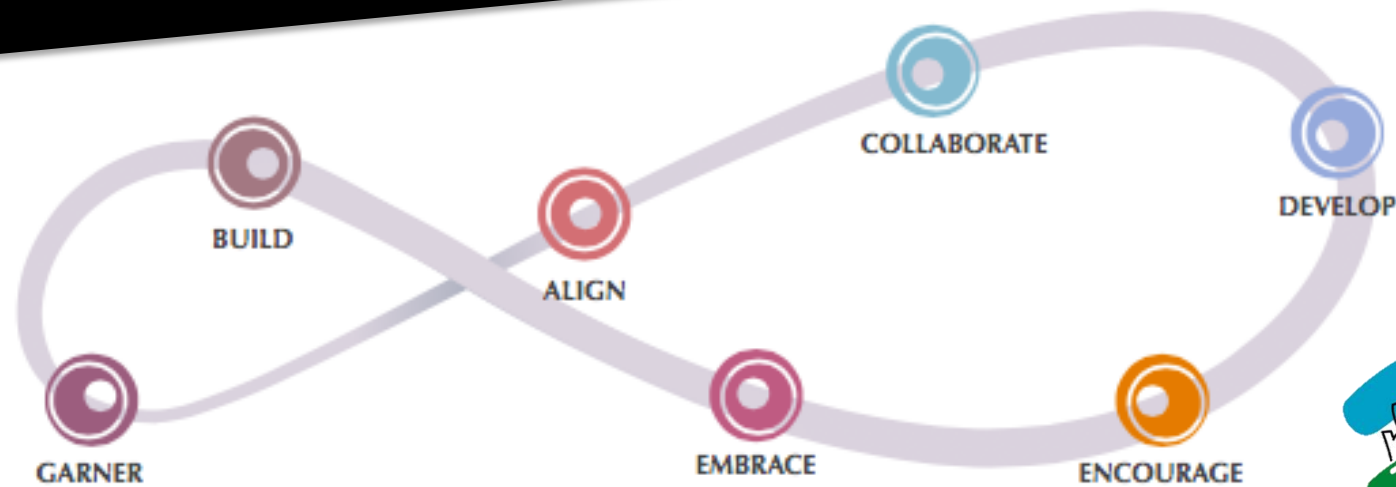## Barriers and strategies

Associate Professor Hartmut Fünfgeld
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
Alianne Macarthur, Sophie Turner, Sarah Robertson
(RMIT University)
Fiona Silke (Loop & Co)

12th International Symposium on Urban Planning and Environment
May 31 – June 3, 2016, Lisbon, Portugal

Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership: Two action research projects

Embedding adaptation in two 'advanced' local governments

- 2 year project, City of Greater Geelong & City of Yarra
- **Q:** Understanding the organisational support context for enabling systematic integration of CCA considerations into planning / decision-making
- **Focus:** organisational scale, inter-departmental learning and innovation

Regional collaboration to integrate CCA and develop adaptive capacity

- 2 year project, 6 local governments in southeast Victoria (Gippsland region)
- **Q:** How can policy and decision-making coherence for CCA be enhanced across diverse local governments?
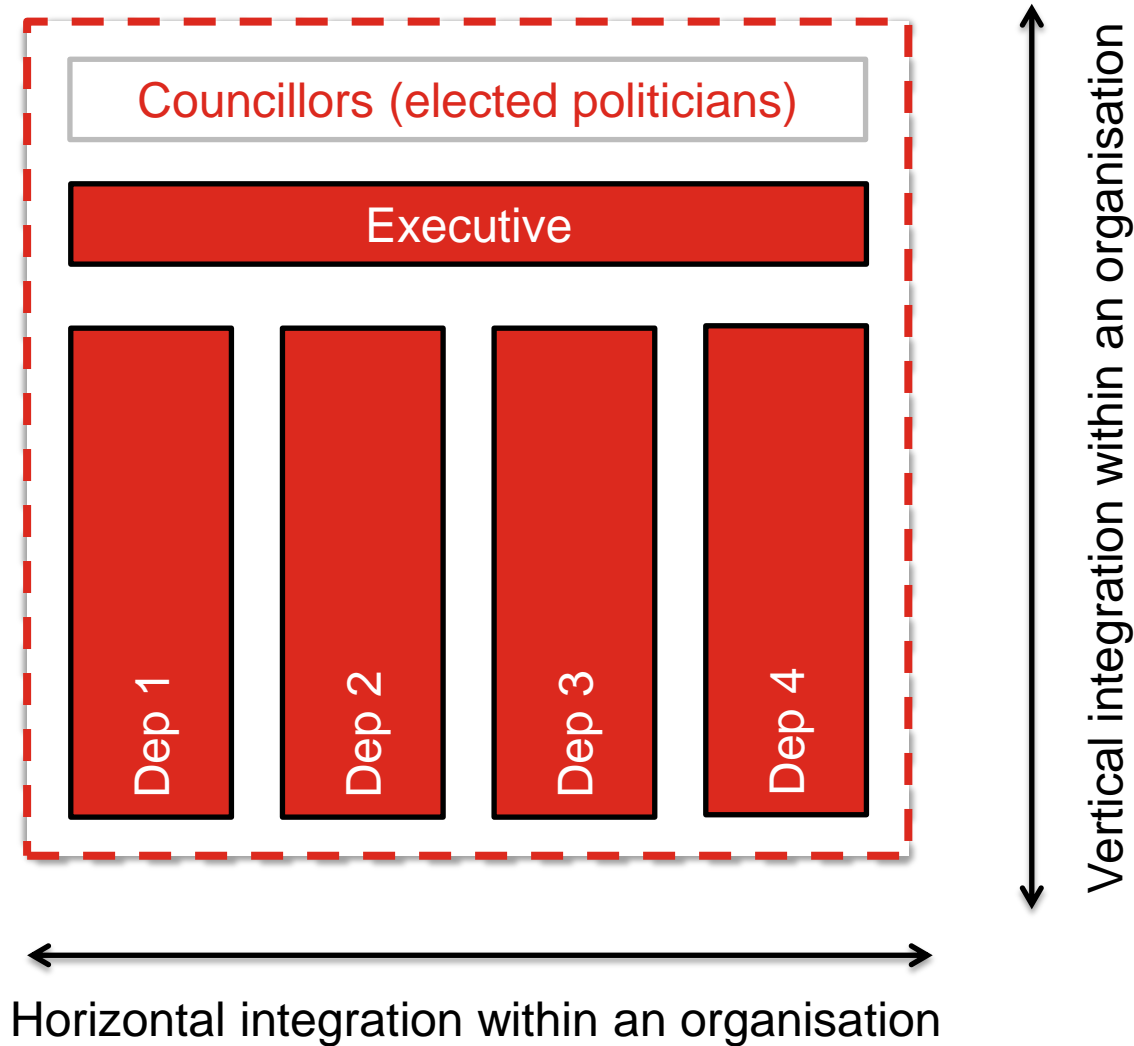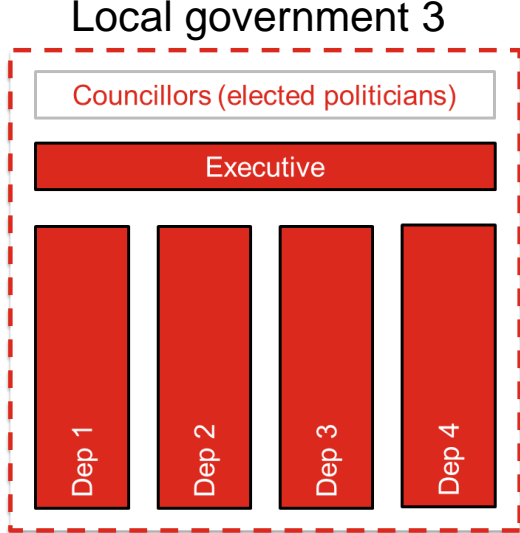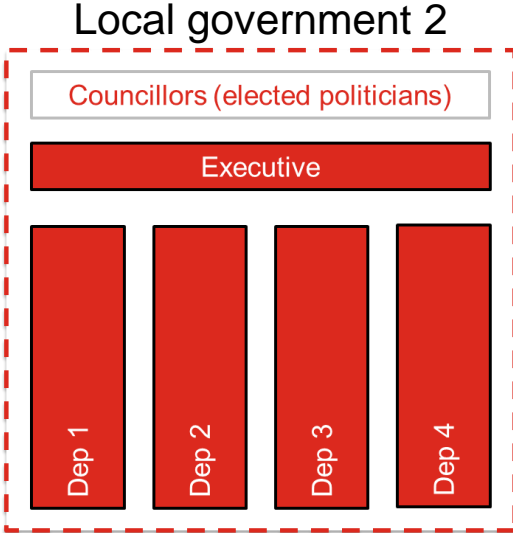- **Focus:** regional institutional scale, inter-organisational learning and capacity building

Supported by

Sustainability Fund

State Government Victoria

Loddon Mallee

Grampians

Hume

Western North Eastern & Central
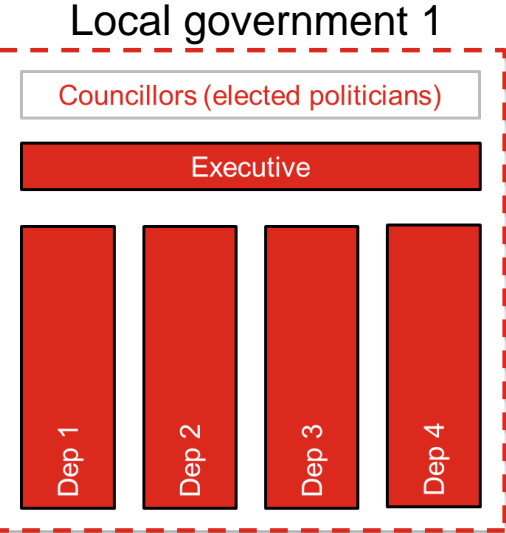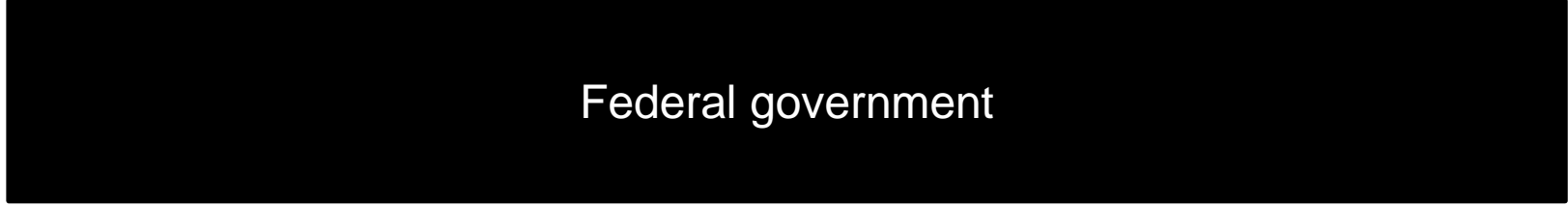
Gippsland

Barwon South Western

Southern

Methods: - Baseline survey on CCA integration across 5 organisations with 201 respondents (follow up survey scheduled for July 2016)
- Council self-assessment, followed by formal training
- Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

Climate change adaptation – a case for policy integration

- **Climate change impacts** will increasingly affect society, requiring institutional responses across the full spectrum of governance, from civil society to government:
  - Incremental adjustments
  - Transformative change
- **Climate change adaptation**:
  - Cuts across policy domains, departmental and disciplinary boundaries
  - Requires both strategic and operational-level planning
  → Calls for **vertical** and **horizontal** policy integration

Climate change adaptation – a case for policy integration

Councillors (elected politicians)

Executive

Dep 1 · Dep 2 · Dep 3 · Dep 4

Vertical integration within an organisation

Horizontal integration within an organisation

Climate change adaptation – a case for policy integration

- **Climate change impacts** will increasingly affect society, requiring institutional responses across the full spectrum of governance, from civil society to government:
  - Incremental adjustments
  - Transformative change
- **Climate change adaptation**:
  - Cuts across policy domains, departmental and disciplinary boundaries
  - Requires both strategic and operational-level planning
  → Calls for **vertical** and **horizontal** policy integration
- Such integration is the aim of approaches of *mainstreaming*, *framing*, and *embedding*

Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into existing policy agendas

- **Climate change adaptation** – like gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability – is too complex an issue to be addressed through standalone, discrete planning, decision-making and implementation
- **Mainstreaming of CCA**: "integration of policies and measures to address climate change in ongoing sectoral and development planning and decision-making, aimed at… reducing the sensitivity of development activities to future climatic conditions" (Klein et al., 2007, p. 749)

→ *Moving away from projects and once-off initiatives to considering climate change impacts and adaptation systematically and strategically*

Embedding adaptation into organisations – emergent theory

- Processes of adaptation involve changes to organisational '**routines**'. Routines […] come to be challenged and adjusted in processes of learning (Berkhout, 2006)
- **Connecting** imperatives of future adaptation to **more familiar sets of issues**, and to **existing decision making** and policy processes (Dovers, 2009).
- …bringing [climate change impacts] into **established practices** and procedures such as business continuity and asset management (Brown et al. 2011)
- Where adaptation planning and action on climate risk and resilience is integrated into an organisation (or specific function within an organisation) to become **business as usual** (Inglis et al. 2014).

➔ *Detailed anchoring of climate change impacts and adaptation considerations in organisational processes (planning, decision-making, operations)*

Documented strategies for embedding adaptation in organisations

Strategy	Description
1. Interpreting the organisational framing of adaptation	Explicitly identifying and deciding on the purpose of adaptation in an organisation helps ensure all staff are working towards the same vision.
2. Aligning adaptation with existing strategies and policies	Strategies, policies and decision making processes set out the priorities of an organisation, and CCA considerations must be included within them.
3. Garner senior management support	Senior leaders' support is critical for prioritise CCA and enable resources to be allocated to a task.
4. Collaborate across the organisation and beyond	CCA cuts across many functions of a local government or a community, making collaboration essential.
5. Encourage multi-loop organisational learning	Learning can happen through formal training or informal reflection on organisational achievement and challenges.
6. Embrace organisational change	Building an awareness of the need to implement change, and the desire to support and participate in change, is key for CCA to be effective.

Full review: Turner, S, Fünfgeld, H and Robertson, S (2016): Strategies for Embedding Climate Change Adaptation in Public Sector Organisations: A Review of the Academic and Grey Literature. Melbourne: RMIT University Centre for Urban Research.

Framing: making sense of adaptation

Table 1. Common adaptation policy frames, their characteristics, and policy implications.

Adaptation frame	Characteristics	Typical policy response
Avoiding disasters	climate change impacts are equal to or exacerbate natural disasters	*disaster risk management*: institutionalise adaptation thinking in emergency services to ensure public health and safety
Community resilience	climate change impacts cause human suffering by exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and structural inequality	*social development*: adaptation is improving community services and focusing on community development outcomes such as public health and safety, community support schemes, and poverty reduction
Averting organisational risk	climate change impacts lead to costs (financial or otherwise) and economic risks that need to be avoided or mitigated	*organisational risk management*: embed adaptation in fiscal policy and auditing processes and foster robust economic development

Context: climate change adaptation policy in Australia & Victoria

Constraints:
- Weak fiscal and political role of local government
- Weak multi-level adaptation governance & lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Widespread climate change scepticism
- Reluctance to regulate; market-based mechanisms favoured

Enablers:
- Some bi-partisan support for adaptation
- State-level initiatives for adaptation planning, but mostly project-based
- In Victoria:
  - Climate Change Act 2010, reviewed 2016
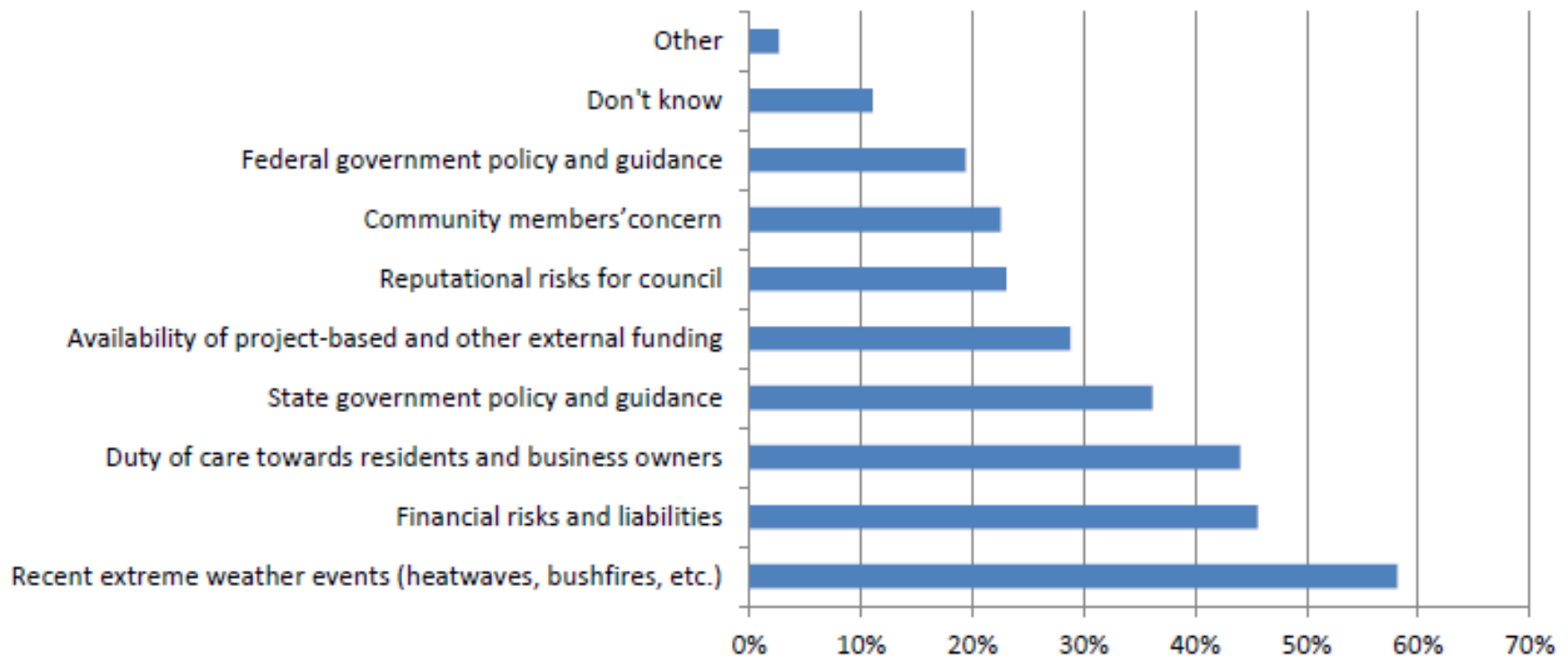 - Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2013, 2016

Main drivers for climate change adaptation planning and implementation

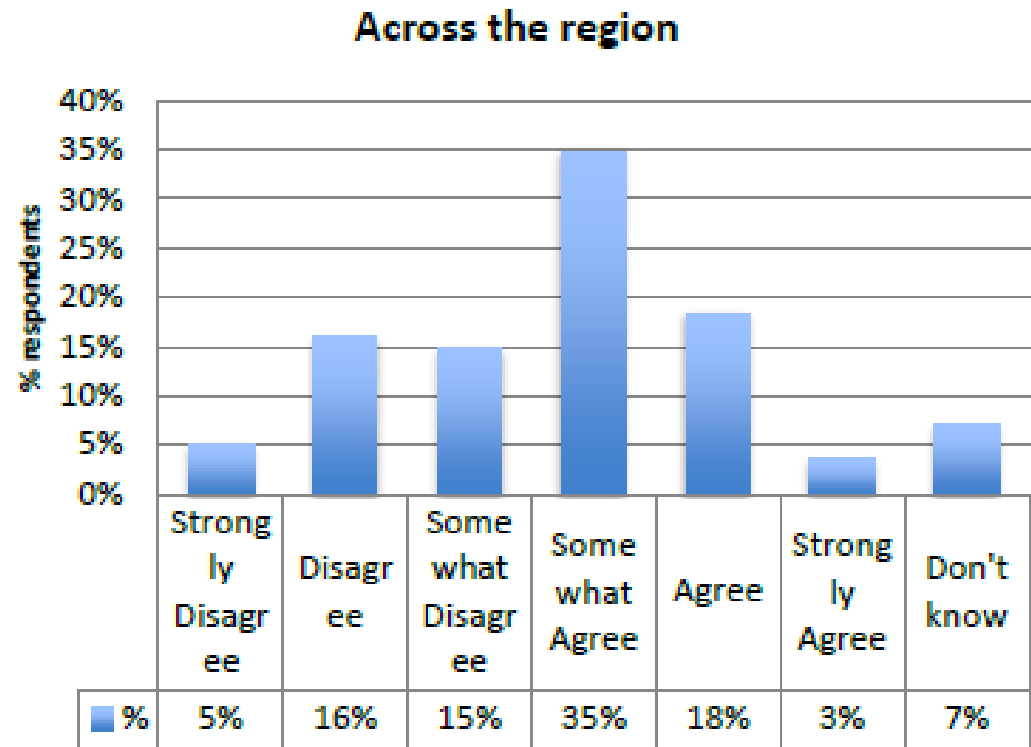Total respondents = 191

Across the region

Framing: is there a shared understanding about CCA?

Agreement with the statement:

'There is a shared understanding among council staff about what the organisation needs to do to effectively prepare for and respond to climate change.'

- 56% agree
- 36% disagree
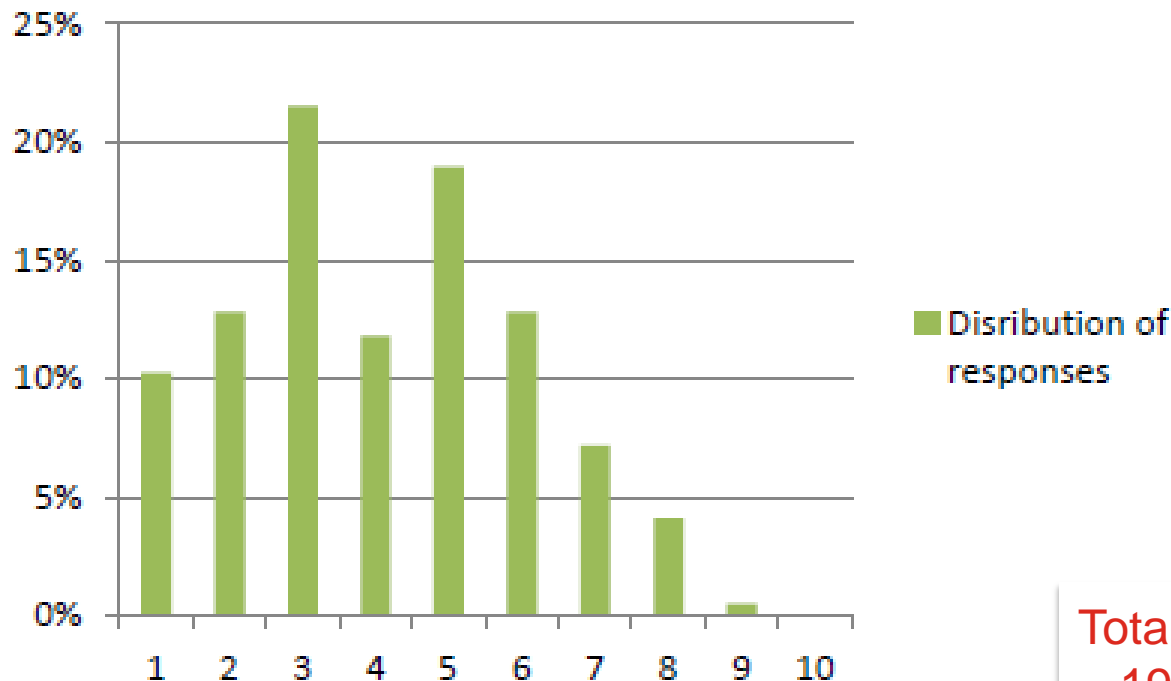
Across the region

%	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
%	5%	16%	15%	35%	18%	3%	7%

Total no. respondents = 201

How well are local governments integrating climate change impacts into planning and decision-making?

Question: 'How would you rate your council's current level of integrating climate change risks and adaptation into its strategies, plans and operations (with 1 star signifying no integration and 10 stars signifying the highest possible level of integration)?'

Across the region

Total no. respondents = 195
Mean = 4.1

Indications of CCA mainstreaming

Are you aware of any council strategies, plans or operational procedures where climate change risks and/or adaptation have been considered?

Not aware 21%

Aware 79%

Total no. respondents = 131

Interview & focus group findings

- Concern that CCA is yet another issue to be mainstreamed, stretching the capacity of governance structures and staff time
- Some indications of successful 'mainstreaming' but perpetuating status quo - "We are now adapted to climate change" – little in the way of transformative organisational change
- CC adaptation is far from becoming core business in local government – horizontal integration slow and iterative (both at local and regional scales)
- Evidence that there is a shared *understanding* of climate change impacts and their relevance to local government operations but this hasn't translated into coordinated action
- Barriers continue to include competing demands on staff time, lack of funding, and lack of understanding on the impacts of CC

THANK YOU
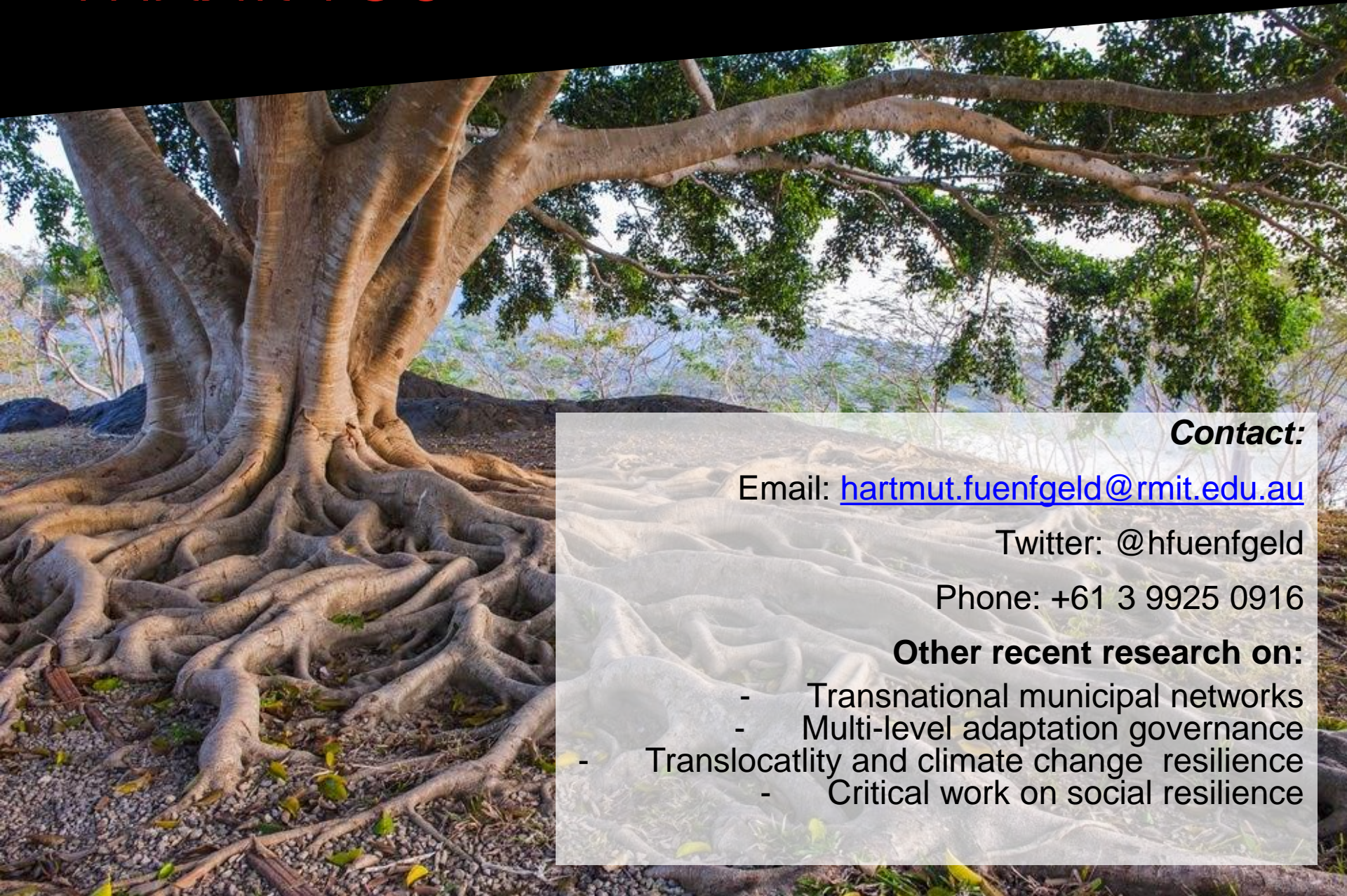
Contact:

Email: hartmut.fuenfgeld@rmit.edu.au

Twitter: @hfuenfgeld

Phone: +61 3 9925 0916

Other recent research on:
- Transnational municipal networks
- Multi-level adaptation governance
- Translocatlity and climate change resilience
- Critical work on social resilience