

This document is intended for decision-makers across the Pacific with an interest in policy and planning, infrastructure, and climate change governance.

The Australian Government's



**Planning:** Research into climate change impacts on key infrastructure in the Cook Islands means the Cook Islands Government can develop relevant and robust policies. The climate change department recognises that research is extremely important to guide policy development.

The Cook Islands recognises that any national action plan should be strongly 'embedded' in the relevant policy. This maximises support for the plan at various levels of governance—international, regional and national.

At an international level, the JNAP is shaped by a number of interrelated conventions and frameworks relating to sustainable development, environment, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and disaster risk management. For example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

These conventions and policies are largely mirrored at the regional level. The two key frameworks which influence the JNAP are the:

- » Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005
- » Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006–2015.

At a national level in the Cook Islands, the JNAP is closely linked to the *National Sustainable Development Plan* as well as various acts and frameworks surrounding finance, disaster risk management and recovery, infrastructure and the environment.

**Supporting:** Senior environment officer for Cook Islands National Environment Services Teresa 'Mii' Matamaki says it is important to collect feedback from remote communities when creating a national policy.

The *Cook Islands Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy* provides greater mandate for climate change activities within government.

To inform the policy, the Cook Islands National Environment Services visited five of the Cook Islands' smallest and most isolated islands to understand and assess community vulnerability and capacity to adapt to climate change risks and disaster events.

Communities were given the opportunity to provide feedback about their understanding of climate change, as well as learn about the impacts of climate change.

All communities recognise that climate change is happening and that they are extremely vulnerable to the risks given their remoteness; lack of infrastructure; and vulnerability to sea-level rise, drought and more intense cyclonic events.

The Cook Islands Government is using community feedback to prepare, adapt and improve local and national decision-making and planning. Priorities include:

- » improve early warning systems, building codes, water storage and infrastructure
- » draft environmental protection, waste-management and drought-management plans
- » build cyclone shelters
- » establish local emergency operation centres to coordinate responses and maintain communication with the National Emergency Operation Centre in Rarotonga.

"The JNAP is a really important framework for us because it provides us direction."

Ana Tiraa, director of Climate Change Cook Islands

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