

TE WAIORA



Nelson Marlborough
Health

Tasman District Council

Coastal management - responding to climate change

15 October 2021

For more information please contact:
Jane Murray
NMDHB Public Health Service
Email: jane.murray@nmdhb.govt.nz
Phone: (03) 543 7805

Submitter details

1. Nelson Marlborough Health (Nelson Marlborough District Health Board) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH appreciates the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Tasman District Council's Coastal management - Responding to climate change
2. NMH makes this submission in recognition of its responsibilities to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.
3. This submission sets out particular matters of interest and concern to NMH.

Specific Comments

4. NMH congratulates Tasman District Council for engaging with local communities on the issue of sea level rise. Sea level rise and erosion will impact the health of our environment and communities.

Accommodate

5. Raised ground levels and floor levels of buildings are some the tools that could be used. However, the Council would need to be very clear on their expectations on what level of infrastructure servicing will be provided over time.
6. In addition, future residents may not be able to afford relocations so it would be beneficial for the Council to clearly state what support that they would give to home owners should relocation be required.

Avoid

7. NMH strongly supports using "Avoidance measures" such as land use planning measures to ensure that people and property are not placed in hazardous locations.
8. It must also be noted that the protection of highly productive land is still retained. Enabling local food production and markets means that communities have easy access for fresh food which is important for nutrition and overall health and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. As populations increase, there will be further demand for food which can increase prices resulting in the population's ability to access cheap food. Therefore it is important that highly productive land is protected from urban encroachment

Retreat

9. Retreat is a complex issue that many New Zealand regions are grappling with. It is hoped that there will be strong national direction provided in the near future. Consideration needs to be given to vulnerable populations along the coast which may not have the financial means or the wish to relocate.

Protect

10. NMH strongly supports the use of soft protections such as dunes and wetland restoration. These measures have the benefit of reducing coastal natural hazards as well as improving ecological values.

11. In terms of hard protections, consideration needs to be given to the whole environment rather than just at the household site. Hard protection measures may exacerbate problems for other areas. There is also a carbon cost of building hard protection structures which needs to be factored in. In addition, expectations need to be clearly articulated to communities in terms of how much further investment will be made into protecting and restoring hard protection measures after extreme weather events.

12. NMH would like to highlight the importance of the protection of lifeline utilities infrastructure. From a public health perspective, salt-water intrusion into aquifers is a major concern. In Tasman, there are a range of drinking water supplies (both Council and privately owned) drawing water for human consumption which are located near the coast.

13. In addition there are a number of key transport routes which are very close to the coast and are vulnerable to sea level rise.

14. As new information emerges, TDC needs to have the ability to react to the extent and speed of sea level rise. NMH advocates for a comprehensive assessment of vulnerable public infrastructure along the coastlines. It is critical that plans and funding for adaptive strategies are available in order to secure lifeline infrastructure.

15. Consideration should be given to ensuring that potentially toxic and/or biologically contaminative facilities e.g. sewage treatment plants, solid and hazardous waste disposal facilities, chemical manufacturers (past and present) meet stringent design and maintenance requirements intended to seal potential contaminants within sea water-proof buildings and containers when storms occur. This is especially important given the problems with erosion at the old Fox Glacier landfill site. Any new facility must be required to be sited away from vulnerable coastlines.

16. Along with coastal management adaptation, consideration still needs to be given reducing overall carbon emissions. In terms of the creation of hard structures or relocation, the carbon cost of construction also needs to be accounted for.
17. In addition, further consideration must be given to reducing overall carbon emissions in the district. It was disappointing to see that TDC did not opt for higher investment in the short term for climate change programmes as part of the 2021 Long Term Plan processes. As stated in our earlier submission, climate change will have a significant effect on the region, and in order to mitigate the magnitude of those effects, work needs to occur now. Failing to implement healthy and equitable climate policies now accepts an avoidable burden of ill-health in future generations, disproportionately affecting already marginalised people.
18. NMH recommends that all levels of government significantly reduce emissions from today. The COVID response has shown that governments can use many mechanisms to make rapid change. Further emission reductions will contribute to reducing the risk of an overshoot beyond 1.5°C with its incrementally greater health risks.
19. Active and public transport modes provide both environmental and public health benefits such as more equitable access to transport, further reduced air pollution from reduced tyre wear and brake use, increase in physical activity and improved liveability. Investment needs to be made into future proofing active and public transport infrastructure in low lying areas.
20. NMH would like to stress the importance of warmer drier homes from both an energy efficiency point of view and a health perspective. People who live in warmer drier homes tend to be healthier, with fewer GP and hospital visits and fewer days away from work due to illness. It is important that housing in low-lying areas is not putting vulnerable communities at risk. Frequent flooding or storm tide inundation will weaken housing structures. Poor housing exacerbates existing health conditions and heighten the impacts of impairment. This triggers dislocation from their communities, admission to an unnecessarily high level of care and support, and shift the cost of what is primarily a housing problem onto the health and social services sectors.

Conclusion

21.NMH thanks the Tasman District Council for the opportunity to comment on the Coastal management - Responding to climate change.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lexie O'Shea', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Lexie O'Shea

Chief Executive

lexie.oshea@nmdhb.govt.nz