

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION – FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ACTION

ROSIE ROWE: I would like to pay my respects to the Kulin nation and the elders, both past and present, and, indeed, I think we've got a lot to learn and a lot of discussions to have on this topic of climate change with the Indigenous communities of our country.

The story that I'd like to share with you is only the start of our journey on climate change, but I will be suggesting that the partnership approach is powerful because we are getting better solutions, we're generating greater resources, we're causing real change and, really, people are enjoying it.

I'm Rosie Rowe, and until one month ago I was the Executive Officer of the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership, made up of 18 agencies, and while being part of the PCP for the last eight years, of course they've been working together for perhaps much longer than that in our local areas.

So let's take a quick trip on the PCP jet, and we'll fly you across the catchment of south-west Victoria with about 50,000 people. We start in the north with the majestic Grampians looming up from the mist, and we travel south down to the ocean, the powerful ocean near Portland. Of course, we're home to the highest density of merino sheep in the world and we're also home to the few Aboriginal stone settlements in Australia. It was such an abundant place they stayed and they could build settlements. So flying over we've seen the towns of Hamilton and Portland and Casterton; you've had in-flight catering from the nation's finest chefs in Dunkeld.

My agenda today is to outline how we've thought about the problem of climate change, what we've done and some of the early outcomes.

The story starts with a strategic planning process, but what better way to think of this than Richard Weatherly's eagle soaring over the Howqua Valley. Richard is a renowned local artist, and I'll be using a couple of other local artists to tell the

story today.

We really had to first, of course, decide on what our goal was: how would we make the biggest difference in a very large global problem? After much discussion, much heated discussion, amongst our partners, it was clear that what we needed to do was to tackle the social as well as the economic and environmental impacts of climate change. We needed to increase resilience to change.

We posed three questions: What will be the impact for our community and who will be impacted most? How can we make the difference? Who else do we need to partner with? We started googling and emailing, contacting agriculture, natural resource management, health promotion experts within the State, across the nation, contacts across the world to answer these questions. Of course, we had a wealth of existing information on our health status, but we teamed it up with the physical information from CSIRO, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, illness work that's happening, of course, with the Department of Human Services. But our contacts opened up new doors to information. The important work from the DPI by Neil Barr really explores the social and demographic landscapes of the State. How was climate change to overlay these changes for us in our local community? One of the key things it pointed for us is that it is going to shift a lot of disadvantage into some smaller townships, as housing affordability is a problem in larger towns. More doors opened. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics looks at the index of vulnerability in light of changes to agriculture. This was important information for us. It showed pockets, the red areas being the highest vulnerability in the State.

So from this wealth of information, a collection from a range of different partners, we really reached our conclusion that climate change would have the greatest impact on the lowest socioeconomic households in our area, those with less resources to adapt impacted by rising energy and fuel and food

costs, particularly disadvantage in smaller towns, access away from services, and farm families vulnerable to climatic conditions. We concluded that our action needed to be in four key areas: in household, energy, water, fresh food and transport.

Now, this all seems extremely logical, doesn't it, sitting here today? Twelve months ago there was very little written about it, very little to guide our work, and we were absolutely delighted that VCOSS released their report late last year, which really concluded and helped us to set that we're on the same path about low socioeconomic households and impact.

So working across the silos, collecting more information is really generating greater information, helping us to think about better solutions.

The next question was: what action was needed locally? Carmel Wallace's beautiful work pieces together the remnants of crab pots washed up on Discovery Bay National Park on the South West Walk. For me, it depicts the matrix of our action plan, including actions to change policy, increasing our skills, supporting community action, reorienting our service system. It also, of course, contains the myriad of solutions that many of our partners were helping us to come to.

I've got time perhaps just to give you one quick example. It's an example around a small town that we're working in. Town X I'm going to call it. It's been highlighted in all the data that it's very vulnerable and disadvantaged. We suggest they have a lot of advantage and a lot of assets, and that's why I'm not going to name their town today. So we've started a community development approach, immersing ourselves, listening to the community, being with them, and through that listening and learning we've really seen more than the fact that visually we see empty shops, we see few services, we see elderly people, we see probably 80 per cent of people living in weatherboard homes. If it's 30 degrees outside, it's 30 degrees inside. So if you're elderly, you're chronically ill, you've got young children, think about the impacts as temperatures rise even more.

So we've started a partnership with some dynamic young people. Twenty young people in a very small town meet at the youth group, and a local environmental engineer to small temperature loggers in the homes of these small towns. It's a way of showing the temperature difference between the outside and the inside, and what a great engagement way to physically show the impact of rising temperature and the need to retrofit their homes. It's about reducing energy needs, it's about reducing cost. It's, of course, reducing ill health from the risk of heat wave.

So we believe our partnership approach is really leading to better solutions and creating real change.

You'll need to read more of the detail in the publication that details a lot of our work on climate change, and thanks to the McCaughey Centre of the University of Melbourne, who published this work, and the Department of Human Services, who supported some of the printing costs.

Essentially, it's a planning framework, a way of thinking, and across the State it's been on an email trail, which sometimes gets back to me, and I read these trails of words about how they're finding this approach. 'This is the best written work on climate change I've read,' wrote somebody; 'This framework liberates us from thinking we are powerless,' says another one. I grabbed a cup of tea, ready to wade through another document, but it gripped me. I couldn't put it down. The tea went cold. We've reviewed it by senior policymakers, by academics, by international experts on health promotion, by some of our leading community leaders, and we're delighted that it's receiving such a great response and obviously is relevant to the way people want to respond.

So what is the power of partnership in this story? Nicky Hepburn's work depicts the fauna and the flora on the South West Walk. On the left you'll see the cuttlefish, then the seed pods, the insect galls and the bark. For me, it beautifully depicts the four outcomes of partnership work, the power: firstly, better

solutions. Our work across the silos leads us to better information, better information and knowledge that we can build better solutions. Our little town story is a lovely one which has opened up our eyes from a local environmental engineer to cheap and effective ways to retrofit buildings. We're going to scale that up to other big towns in our catchment. For him, the partnership offers a non-bureaucratic, flexible way that he can start to use his sustainability solutions and get them in action.

Secondly, it's about greater resources. Our work quite quickly attracted over \$100,000 from health, natural resource management and academic institutions. We've collected hubs of people with information and resources and knowledge. We've established great links in Canada and we're starting a comparative research project, which seems to be ballooning out to about seven sites across the world.

Thirdly, it's about real change. On the ground we're seeing system change. Services are reorienting the way they think about delivering to smaller townships: how can we do that in a better way? We're also seeing structural change in partnerships. I think it's the first time in the five years that I've worked at the PCP that I've really seen the environment and natural resources sitting down with health and, of course, real change and the impact and influence that we are making from a local level. Champions have taken our work to the tables of national policymakers, to the Deputy Prime Minister's adviser, to the Ontario climate change policy committee and to various networks in Canada.

So the fourth one - we've covered solutions and greater resources and real change, and, really, the fourth one is about working together and having fun, it's about the power of people, and I'm convinced that the outcome of our partnership work is that people have enjoyed working together and want to keep working together to solve many problems. These phone sheep perhaps reveal the real answer. Great partnerships enable you, encourage you to get a better understanding of other people's views of the world. From that, you get better results.

So the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership's work on climate change has been an exciting journey that commenced 12 months ago. The partnership process has allowed us to soar like an eagle and to tackle a complex global issue. It's led to better solutions, greater resources, real change and people wanting to work together. It's led us to partnerships across the world that will have a far greater impact for our local community and solutions for our local community than any individual entity could ever achieve.

END OF TRANSCRIPT