

(Ignoring) Alternative discourses in local climate change policy

Diana MacCallum, Jason Byrne, Griffith University, d.maccallum@griffith.edu.au

Climate change is one of the most pressing contemporary issues facing Australian cities, with implications for all scales of governance, including that of the family/individual. Australian policy responses have tended to emphasise four key solutions: (i) carbon trading schemes; (ii) the adoption of 'green' technologies to reduce greenhouse emissions within specific industries, public infrastructure provision, and residential developments; (iii) the promotion of urban forms thought to be more energy efficient, and (iv) impact mitigation, especially for sea level rise (Byrne et al. 2009). These solutions generally appear at first glance to fall firmly within an 'ecological modernisation' paradigm, a particular model for understanding which is underwritten by scientific and technological discourses. In this paper we examine climate-change-related planning and policy instruments of three local government authorities in South East Queensland – the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Redland City Councils – for the influence of alternative ways of knowing, fighting and adjusting to climate change. We pay special attention to whether these governance instruments (e.g. town planning schemes, growth management strategies & corporate plans) provide space for gendered, Indigenous and ethnically diverse knowledges in the development of local responses, and ask what the implications of doing so might mean for implementing multi-scalar climate change adaptive responses in these and other Australian Cities.

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