

Turning theory into practical action

COUNCIL NAME

Mid North Coast
Joint Organisation

WEB ADDRESS

mncjo.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

8,658 square
kilometres

POPULATION

121,000

FUNDING PROGRAM

Increasing
Resilience to
Climate Change

Overview

The New South Wales North Coast is home to world heritage rainforests, nine major river catchments and vast beaches. This rich ecosystem supports thriving regions, iconic towns, and flourishing tourism and agricultural industries.

But the region's delicately balanced biodiversity is at risk. Climate change is already affecting the North Coast. According to the [region's climate snapshot](#), rainfall patterns are changing, and this will lead to more floods and droughts. Average temperatures will continue to rise and the risk of fire weather will increase.

To help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change, the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation, or MNCJO, established a partnership with Charles Sturt University to train selected members of the community and council staff in leadership and resilience.



Bellingen Shire. Photo credit: Bellingen Council

Background

Can a program of proactive climate change education empower leadership, build resilience, forge new partnerships and enhance social cohesion?

With funding from the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change program, MNCJO and Charles Sturt University set out to answer this question.

MNCJO brings together the councils of Port Macquarie-Hastings, Bellingen Shire and Kempsey Shire – each representing communities that have weathered drought, fires, floods and Covid-19 in just a few short years.

MNCJO and Charles Sturt University collaborated to present four targeted courses focused on leadership, change management and inclusion. Participants were then offered an opportunity to lead new projects that would help their communities adapt to a changing climate.

Implementation

Thirty participants selected two units of study across four topics: Inclusive Community Engagement; Leading Change; Transformational Leadership and Building Community

Resilience. Throughout their studies, each participant was encouraged to draw on the course material to develop project ideas.

Following the course work, several ground-breaking projects were pitched and initiated. A weather watch program was established to engage 'citizen scientists' to monitor river levels during flood events. A coordination hub aims to encourage greater communication between communities during severe weather events. And the purchase of satellite phones offers extra reassurance and support during extreme weather events.

Outcomes

Hard-won experience in recent years has shown that a lack of telecommunications is a significant issue in the mid North Coast, especially during natural disasters. The three projects have built community confidence in their capacity to respond to severe weather events.

Capital costs associated with the information hub and weather watch projects were minimal and community buy-in was strong. The nine satellite phones will remain assets of MNCJO and processes have been established to ensure they are charged and ready for distribution as the need arises.

Key Learnings

The project was not without its challenges. Covid, home schooling and working from home limited the capacity of many participants to fully explore opportunities to develop projects. Community fatigue was an issue in a region still reeling from the series of natural disasters.

While course completion rates were high, a proactive approach was required from MNCJO's team to tease out ideas and turn those into viable projects.

While the project has delivered excellent results, MNCJO's team recommends more 'hands on' support for participants, especially during identification of projects. Strengthening the link between coursework and project work, and more time helping participants convert theory into practice, would improve engagement and interest in follow-up projects.

More information

Learn more about the [Mid North Coast Joint Organisation](#).

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