

Why did we undertake this study?

Social and ecological wellbeing is difficult to attain. Understanding community needs is a first step in implementing policies and programs to improve wellbeing. Australian coastal communities are experiencing rapid change affecting wellbeing. Yet community needs are rarely the focus of policy or management addressing coastal vulnerability. This study sought to better understand community needs in rapidly growing Australian coastal communities and implications for sustainable and just coastal communities.

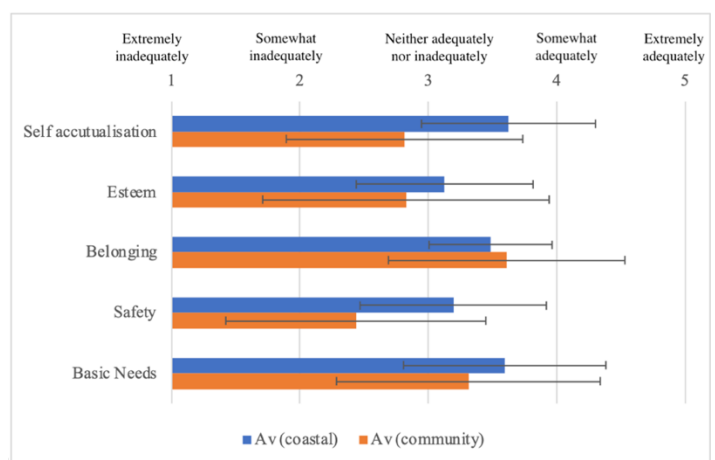
How was it done?

We interviewed 68 coastal and community sector representatives in Australia’s most rapidly growing coastal communities. Interviews discussed themes of vulnerability, coastal governance, innovation, and community need. When discussing community need, respondents rated how well their community can meet its needs (physiologic, safety, love and belonging, esteem, self-actualisation). Significant differences in the assigned rankings were explored in Qualtrics Stats IQ by sector, scale and jurisdiction. Themes in verbal responses were identified via thematic analysis.

What did we find?

Despite measureable differences in the socio-economic status of the case study communities, inequity (the presence of those that have and those that have not) was universal. Furthermore:

- On average, community needs are rarely adequately met. Even in communities considered affluent, conditions of vulnerability belie the image of prosperity.
- Social vulnerabilities not often associated with coastal communities, (e.g., mental ill health, mortgage stress, homelessness, social isolation, and youth crime) were uncovered, alongside intensifying and more established vulnerabilities such as unemployment, limited educational opportunities, and limited health care.
- *Within* and *across* sectors, respondents’ perspectives on community needs varied. Cross-sector differences were particularly apparent regarding the impact coastal hazards can have on the ability of the community to meet its needs.



What are the implications?

Different perspectives can ensure a holistic approach to addressing community needs. Yet divergence can be a problem when issues are addressed in isolation, or when no action is taken. Systemic problems unaddressed increase inequity with negative impacts on community resilience. To take advantage of the opportunities that a broader perspective of vulnerability brings requires greater coordination across sectors, to ensure needs are not only identified, but receive the resources/attention to address them.

Want more information?

The full paper is not currently available online. Keep an eye on the project website for updates.

Citation: Elrick-Barr C ,Thomsen D, Smith T (forthcoming), The wellbeing of rapidly growing Australian coastal communities: Rising inequity and vulnerability, *further details forthcoming*.

Acknowledgements

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Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change

