

**Why did we undertake this study?**

Hope promotes a positive attitude toward the future that can incentivise action. The challenges facing coastal communities are immense and within this context it is unclear if vulnerability managers are optimistic for the future of the coast, or despair at its decline. Further, it is unclear how these perceptions influence implementation of the significant reforms in coastal governance called for to address the challenges faced. This commentary asked these question using coastal governance in Australia as a case example.

**How was it done?**

We drew on the results of semi-structured interviews with coastal managers and community service providers who work in the most rapidly growing coastal communities in Australia; and explored the presence of hope in narratives of coastal governance and vulnerability using qualitative analysis methods (i.e., text search and thematic analysis).

**What did we find?**

When reflecting on coastal governance, vulnerability, and the needs of their community, we found strong positive narratives of hope.

- Coastal managers hoped existing practices and processes would achieve coastal governance goals - and the goals of coastal governance described aligned to good practice coastal governance (see figure).
- Community service providers hoped for change in the systems and processes that determine vulnerability.

Narratives of hope were rarely accompanied by active plans for change. Passive approaches (e.g., seeking change by the community or following extreme events) dominated. Passivity is not a function of the will or drive of those managing vulnerability to deliver change, rather it is a function of embeddedness within socio-institutional systems (politics, economics) that constrain change.

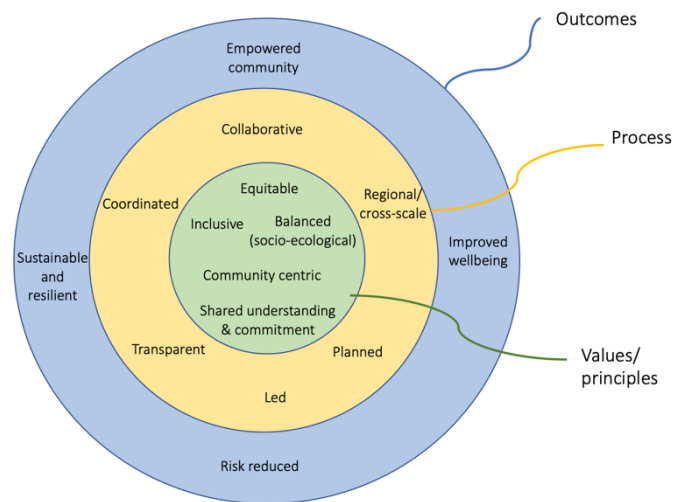


Figure 1: Goals of coastal governance as defined by Australian vulnerability practitioners

**What are the implications?**

To leverage narratives of hope to achieve transformational change hopeful frames must be accompanied by a clear understanding of the elements vital to their success – in this case, *policy* and *community*. Structural (policy) change and individual action can alter the values and norms that currently constrain significant reforms in coastal governance. But such change will take time and effort; and the time to start is now. There is the need to accept difficult discussions, the likelihood of disputes and have the strength to challenge the status quo, because only through the presence of change agents will hopeful futures come to fruition.

**Want more information?**

The full paper is available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2023.106953>

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**Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change**

