A snapshot of the lived values of Lakes Entrance

Results from a phone survey

Project Team

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 199 residents of Lakes Entrance, Lake Bunga, Lake Tyers Beach, Kalimna and Nungurner who participated in the phone survey.

This project has been funded by a Linkage Grant (LP100100586 ) from the Australian Research Council. Our research partners on the linkage grant are the East Gippsland Shire Council, Wellington Shire Council, the Gippsland Coastal Board, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Planning and Community Development. We would like to acknowledge the support provided by these agencies.
Executive Summary

Introduction

Past research on sea-level rise in Gippsland East has focused on the potential physical impacts. None of the research has considered what it is about this area that people value and how these valued things may be at risk from sea-level rise.

This research aims to address this gap by examining the things people value, which can help to understand:

- the risks sea-level rise poses to the things that are important to people
- the goals of strategies to adapt to sea-level rise
- ways to adapt that are fair and equitable

During May 2012 interviews were conducted with 19 households in Lakes Entrance. The aim of the interviews was to develop an in-depth understanding of the things people value about living in Lakes Entrance, we refer to these as ‘lived values’. The interviews revealed that there are at least 71 things that people value about living in Lakes Entrance. The preliminary results of the interviews are available online:

http://abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/GippslandEast

The next stage of the research aimed to determine:

1) Whether the list of lived values derived from the interviews was complete;
2) Which of the lived values identified in the interviews are most shared by the broader Lakes Entrance community; and
3) Which of the lived values are clearly more important than others.

To achieve these aims a phone survey was conducted in Lakes Entrance mid 2012. This report provides a summary of the results of the phone survey.

Methods

Phone interviews were conducted with 199 households in Lakes Entrance, including the nearby localities of Lake Bunga, Lake Tyers, Kalimna and Nungurner. This represents 7% of the population of these areas.

The survey was developed by researchers at the University of Melbourne (named on the front cover) and administered by Sweeney Research (sweeneyresearch.com.au).

The survey was comprised of five sections on: background information; connection to the area; lived values; day-to-day activities; and social relationships.

This document presents a brief summary of the major findings of the survey. A detailed analysis of the data is not presented nor are final conclusions drawn. Further analysis will be conducted over the next six months.

Results

*Socio-economic characteristics.* Compared to the population of the Lakes Entrance region, the survey respondents have similar household incomes, levels of vocational education and employment status, but they tend to be older, more likely to have a university education, and to live as couples. There is also a bias towards women. These differences need to be taken into account when interpreting the results; a
The diversity of values have been captured here but the weighting given to these values may differ between the survey respondents and the whole population of the Lakes Entrance region.

**Connection to the area.** On average each respondent has lived, or holidayed, in the region for 22 years. Almost half have long-term family connections to the area; the majority of respondents who have moved to Lakes Entrance used to holiday in the area as children. The vast majority of respondents intend to continue living and holidaying in Lakes Entrance.

**Lived values.** There are 52 things that respondents independently mentioned that they value about living in the Lakes Entrance region. Of these, 45 overlap with the list of most important lived values that were derived from the interviews. This means that an extra 7 lived values were identified through the phone survey. These included: the open spaces; having a diversity of things to do; seasonal tourism; and having family come to visit.

The lived values identified by the greatest number of respondents and ranked as very important by a majority of respondents are the natural environment, peacefulness, the lifestyle, and being close to water. This is closely followed by social interactions (with family, friends and the community), and access to medical services.

**Frustrations.** The main thing that frustrates respondents about living in the Lakes Entrance region is local council decision-making. This is followed by increased traffic in summer, the poor quality of roads, and limited public transport services.

**Day-to-day activities.** The post popular outdoor activity that respondents engage in is going for a walk. Visiting the local shops as well as going out for coffees and meals are also regular activities. Gardening and visiting the beach are particularly popular in warmer months. Overall, the most frequent activities take place indoors. These include watching television, reading a newspaper, using the computer for leisure, and reading books.

**Social relationships.** More than half the respondents spend time with their family at least once a week and one-third spend time with friends every day. More than half of the respondents also spend time with other community members on a weekly basis. Only one-tenth of respondents indicated that they do not have any close friends in Lakes Entrance. More than half the respondents have a few close friends and are members of at least one group or organisation. Of these respondents, more than half spend time with other group members at least once a week.

**Concluding remarks**

The results presented in this report indicate that there is much that respondents value about living in Lakes Entrance. Almost everyone values the natural environment and the lifestyle it affords. There are also a range of values that appear to be specific to particular groups of people within the community, which relate to a person’s life stage and circumstance. Next, the project team will examine in more detail how particular values are distributed among the communities. In the interim these preliminary results provide a snapshot of what is important about people’s lives in the Lakes Entrance region, which will need to be taken into account when developing responses to adapt to sea-level rise.
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Introduction

The Gippsland East coast stretches between Port Albert in the west to Victoria’s border with New South Wales in the east.

The coast is low lying and largely comprised of erodible sediments, raising concerns about the impact of sea-level rise and extreme events on the long narrow barrier of dunes that separate the lakes from the ocean.

Past research has focused on the potential physical impacts of sea-level rise in this area. None of the research has considered what it is about this area that people value and how these valued things may be at risk from sea-level rise.

This research aims to address this gap by examining the things people value, which can help to understand:

- the risks sea-level rise poses to the things that are important to people
- the goals of strategies to adapt to sea-level rise
- ways to adapt that are fair and equitable

The first step towards meeting these objectives was achieved through 19 interviews with Lakes Entrance residents, conducted in May 2012. The preliminary results of the interviews are available online (http://abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/GippslandEast).

The second step involved conducting a phone survey in Lakes Entrance in August and September 2012. This report provides the preliminary results from the survey.

The next step will involve holding focus groups with community members to talk about what they see as the best adaptation options in view of the lived values that have been identified here.

Methods

During August and September 2012 a phone survey was conducted in Lakes Entrance that reached approximately 7% of all households.

In total, of the 710 eligible households who were contacted 199 completed the survey. This resulted in a completion rate of 28%. On average each interview took 18 minutes to complete.

Initially, any adult who was called was asked to participate. As the survey progressed it became apparent that more females were responding than males and that under 35 year olds were under-represented. An effort was then made to speak to male or younger residents, rather than just the person who answered the phone.

Despite these efforts, once all numbers had been called the younger population was still under-represented (see next section). We believed that this may be because the younger population was less likely to have landlines. We therefore tried to address this gap in our demographic by developing an online version of the survey. This was distributed to local community groups who service a younger population, such as the

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2 Not all households have landlines. This means that only a subset of the 2965 households in the Lakes Entrance region was called.
Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club. Unfortunately, no additional responses were achieved through this means.

Participants mainly came from the suburb of Lakes Entrance (Figure 1), but also the neighbouring localities of Lake Bunga, Lake Tyers Beach, Kalimna and Nungurner.

Figure 1. Nearest intersections (marked with dots) to where respondents lived in Lakes Entrance.
Questions were designed to collect information on:

1. **Socio-economic characteristics.** This included: 1) personal characteristics of the respondent, such as gender, age and education; 2) household characteristics, such as number of people and relationship between people living in the household as well as household income; and 3) geographical information, specifically the nearest street intersection to where people live.

2. **Connection to the area.** This included questions about: whether the respondent’s home in Lakes Entrance is their principal residence or second home; the length of time they have been living in Lakes Entrance; whether the respondent’s family had a connection to the area before moving; and whether they intend to continue living in Lakes Entrance.

3. **Lived values.** This section included questions that aimed to determine whether there were any things people valued about living in Lakes Entrance that had not been identified in the interviews conducted in May 2012. It also asked respondents to rank how important 31 qualities of Lakes Entrance are to them. These qualities were the 31 lived values that emerged as being most important in the interviews.

4. **Day-to-day activities.** This included questions about frequency of participation in a range of social and individual recreational activities.

5. **Social relationships.** This section included questions about: the frequency with which respondents spend time with family, friends and other members of the community; the number of close friends they have who live in Lakes Entrance; and their involvement in community organisations.

The remainder of this report is divided into five sections, reflecting the survey structure. Each section provides a summary of responses to questions from the corresponding section of the survey.
Socio-economic characteristics

In order to gauge the representativeness of the people who responded to the phone survey, comparisons are made between the people who responded to the survey and the entire adult population of the Lakes Entrance region. We use the term Lakes Entrance region to refer to the area covered by the State Suburb statistical areas of Lakes Entrance, Lake Bunga, Lake Tyers Beach, Kalimna and Nungurner (as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2012). We use this area for comparison because it reflects the region in which survey respondents resided (Table 1). Where possible, data from the 2011 Census (ABS, 2012) are used for comparison.

7% of all households within the Lakes Entrance region completed the phone survey (Table 1). On average respondents’ households contained 2.4 residents, which compares closely to the average of 2.3 residents per household in the broader Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Suburb</th>
<th>Number of survey respondents</th>
<th>Number of households (ABS, 2012)</th>
<th>Number of adults (ABS, 2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td>3666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Bunga</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Tyers Beach</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalimna</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nungurner</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>2965</td>
<td>6069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 1% of the respondents identified as being indigenous. This marginally lower than the adult indigenous population of the region, which is approximately 2.4% (ABS, 2012).

Gender

There were some differences between the proportion of female and male respondents compared to the Lakes Entrance region. Women made up 65.8% of respondents, while they comprise 52.0% of the total adult population. This means that the results may reflect the views of women more than men.

Age distribution

Survey respondents covered a wide range of ages (Figure 2). However, there was some underrepresentation of people less than 35 years of age compared to the adult population of the Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012). This was due to there being an overrepresentation of respondents in the 55-64 and 65-74 age groups. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results; the results reflect the values of an older population than that of the Lakes Entrance region.
Figure 2. Age distribution of survey respondents and the adult population of the Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012).

Education

Data collected on educational attainment in the survey and that collected by the 2011 Census (ABS, 2012) are not directly comparable. This is because the phone survey only asked one question about educational attainment. By comparison, the census asks two questions: one about the highest level of schooling completed, and another about the highest level of educational qualification (vocational or university) completed. Thus it is not possible to determine from the census data the number of people who have a school education as their highest qualification. This is significant in the Lakes Entrance region given that almost half (44.7%) of the respondents indicated that the highest level of education they attained was high school.

Comparing the 2011 Census data on highest level of education achieved against the survey indicates that the respondents tended to have more university qualifications, but similar vocational qualifications, compared to the broader population (Figure 3).
Figure 3. Highest level of education attained by survey respondents, who continued their education beyond high school, compared to the Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012).

Income

The household income of respondents was comparable to the broader population of the Lakes Entrance region (Figure 4). About half the respondents are on gross household incomes of $999 per week or less.

Figure 4. Gross weekly household incomes of survey respondents compared to the Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012).

Employment status

The employment status of respondents was comparable to the broader population of the Lakes Entrance region (Figure 5); half the respondents were engaged in full-time or part-time work.
Figure 5. Proportion of respondents engaged in full-time work, part-time work or not working (including those who are looking for work, studying and retired) compared to the Lakes Entrance Region (ABS, 2012).

Household composition

The relationship among members of households for survey respondents is comparable with the broader population (Figure 6). The main difference is that couple and single households are over- and under-represented, respectively.

![Household composition chart]

Figure 6. Relationship among members of the households among survey respondents and the broader Lakes Entrance region (ABS, 2012).

Overall, the socio-economic characteristics of the survey respondents have strong similarities with the broader population of the Lakes Entrance region. The main differences are that the survey respondents are more likely to be older, have a university education, live as couples, and be women than the regional population. These differences need to be taken into account when interpreting the results presented in the rest of this report.

Connection to the area

On average the respondents had lived, or holidayed, in the region for 22 years. The majority (71.4%) definitely plan to continue living, or holidaying, in Lakes Entrance and a further one-fifth (19.6%) say they ‘probably’ will.

Permanent residents

The overwhelming majority of respondents (98.0%) live in the Lakes Entrance region on a permanent basis and have done so for 22 years on average.

One-tenth of the permanent respondents have lived in the region all their lives, an average of 51 years. The remaining nine-tenths of the permanent residents moved to the region 18.6 years ago on average. Of these residents who moved to the region, just
over half (55.7%) moved from a capital city (i.e. they can be considered to be sea-
changers) and approximately half (50.6%) had a family connection to the area before
they moved.

**Second home owners**

Two percent of respondents are second home owners, who have holidayed in Lakes
Entrance for 22.5 years on average. This indicates that their length of connection to the
area is similar to that of permanent residents.

Given the small number of second home owners surveyed and the similar length of
connection they have to the region compared to permanent residents, their responses
will be combined with the permanent residents for the remainder of the report. This is
also done to protect the anonymity of these respondents.

**Lived values**

Respondents were asked to specify what is most important to them about living in Lakes
Entrance. This resulted in a list of 52 things that they value about living in the region
(Table 2). We refer to these things as their lived values because they reflect many
aspects of people’s lives. The seven lived values that were mentioned the most
frequently were: the natural environment; the lifestyle; the climate; being close to
water; family; the peace and quiet; and the people.

We then asked respondents to rate the importance of 31 lived values that we had
derived from existing scientific research and the interviews (Figure 7). When ordered
according to importance the seven lived values that had the highest number of ‘very
important’ ratings were: the scenery; the relaxed lifestyle; feeling safe; the natural
environment; access to medical services; peacefulness; and being close to water.

There is considerable overlap between the lived values that appeared at the top of Table
2 and Figure 7. Specifically, the natural environment, the scenery, peacefulness, lifestyle
and being close to water appeared in the top ten of both lists.

Comparing Table 2 with Figure 7 reveals that 20 lived values are present in both lists
(those in italics). A further 15 lived values in Table 2 correspond with lived values that
were identified in the interviews but not raised during the survey (those with an
asterisk). There are also 10 lived values that can be considered to be subcategories of
those identified in the interviews (those with a cross). Thus survey respondents
identified an additional 7 lived values above and beyond what was identified in the
interviews (those that are not in italics and do not have an asterisk).
Table 2. List of lived values provided by respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lived values</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Lived values</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Natural) environment</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Boating†</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Great place to raise a family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather/climate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Shopping/eateries*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to the water (lakes and ocean)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Diversity of things to do</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to family</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet/peaceful/relaxed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Haven/paradise</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The (friendly) people*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Community values†</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful area (scenery)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Freedom*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fishing†</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Nostalgia*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community feel*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beach†</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Untouched/pristine†</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to friends</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (proximity to other places)†</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sense of belonging to the community</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/services (including for retirees)*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Business opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean environment and air (no pollution)*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Close to work*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Everybody knows everybody</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical facilities/services</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family likes it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for outdoor activities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family ties*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to mountains/snowfields†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Family visits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience *</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Home*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural life*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>National parks†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community size</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Open spaces</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Plenty of activities for retirees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away from the city</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Seasonal tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Quality of) education*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spirituality*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of traffic†</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cultural diversity†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7. Importance of lived values. Bars refer to the number of respondents who ranked each lived value as ‘Very important’, ‘Important’ or ‘Not important’. Where bars for a lived value add to less than 199, this is because the remaining individuals stated that the lived value was not applicable or that they did not believe it exists in their community.
In addition to being asked about what they value most about living in Lakes Entrance, respondents were asked about what frustrates them. The list of frustrations presented during the survey was derived from the interviews conducted in May.

Overall, local council decision-making was the greatest frustration for respondents (Figure 8); it was identified by two-thirds (67.8%) of respondents. This was followed by increased traffic in summer, poor quality of roads and limited public transport services, which were all identified as frustrating by almost half of the respondents.

The issues that caused the least frustration were quietness in winter, flooding, limited variety of restaurants and the sense that everybody knows everybody.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to list any additional frustrations that they have with respect to living in Lakes Entrance. These included:

- Insufficient cultural events/opportunities
- Reduced speed limits
- Limited entertainment for young people
- Limited activities for youth
- Limited job opportunities
- Limited medical services
- Lack of footpaths
- Limited entertainment options
- Limited activities for youth
- Limited medical services
- Everybody knows everybody
- Limited variety of restaurants
- Flooding
- Quietness in winter
- Insufficient cultural events/opportunities
- No hospital
- Difficulty getting to see a doctor
- Lack of tourism attractions
- Limited retail shopping
- Insufficient street lighting
- Drainage system causes flooding
- Gossip and social cliques

Note that some of the things that some respondents valued were frustrations for others (Figure 6 and Figure 7). Specifically, retail shopping; public transport; medical services; job opportunities; everybody knows everybody; and variety of restaurants.
Day-to-day activities

We believe that lived values are not only expressed by what people say they like about living in a place but also by what they do. To that end we asked respondents about their daily, weekly and monthly activities.

There are a wide range of activities that survey respondents participate in (Figure 9 and Figure 10). The year-round activities that are undertaken the most frequently are passive activities such as watching television, reading a newspaper or book and using the computer for leisure (Figure 9). The exceptions to this are going for a walk and visiting the local shops. The activities that are participated in least frequently are playing golf, going for a jog, participating in a team sport and riding a bike.

![Figure 9. Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of year-round activities in Lakes Entrance.](image-url)
In warmer months, gardening, visiting the beach and swimming are common activities undertaken by survey respondents (Figure 10). Going surfing or body boarding is only undertaken by one-fifth of the respondents and less than 10% of these respondents go surfing on a daily basis.

![Figure 10](image-url)  
**Figure 10.** Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of activities in warmer months in Lakes Entrance.

### Social relationships

When survey respondents were asked what is most important to them about living in Lakes Entrance, being close to family was fifth most frequently mentioned. Also important were the friendly, local people (listed 8th in Table 2) and being close to friends (listed 14th in Table 2).

When respondents were asked to rank the importance of 31 lived values, 59.3% and 87.4% of respondents said that being close to family and friends, respectively, was important or very important. The lower figure for being close to families was partly because 23.1% of respondents indicated that they did not live close to their family. For respondents who do live close to family, 77.2% indicated that this was important or very important to them.

The greater importance attached to friends compared to family is further reflected in the frequency with which respondents indicated that they spend time with various people (Figure 11). Respondents indicated that they spend more time with their friends than any other group of people. This holds true even if we only look at respondents who live close to both their family and friends.

After friends and family, respondents were more likely to spend time with other members of the community than people who belong to groups or organisations that they belong to or work colleagues outside of a work environment.
Close friends

Given the importance of friends to respondents, it is important to note that 10.1% of respondents indicated that they do not have any close friends\(^2\) and a further 5.5% of respondents indicated that they only have one close friend. The majority (67.8%) of respondents indicate that they have a few close friends and a minority (15.6%) indicated they have a lot (more than 10) of close friends.

Group membership

The majority (71.9%) of respondents indicated that they are members of at least one group or organisation. Almost half (48.2%) the respondents indicated that they were a member of at least two groups and one-tenth (9.5%) indicated that they were a member of four or more groups.

Sports and recreational groups, such as football, netball, bowls, cricket, tennis and fishing, are the most popular groups (Figure 12). This is followed by service and education organisations. Business and tourism and groups involved with animals are the least subscribed to.

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\(^2\) Close friends are defined as people one feels at ease with, can talk to about private matters or can call on for help.
Figure 12. Percentage of survey respondents who belong to groups and organisations.

Concluding remarks

The results presented in this report indicate that there is much that people value about living in Lakes Entrance. The greatest amount of agreement exists around features of the natural environment and the lifestyle it affords. There are also a range of values that appear to be specific to particular groups of people within the community, which relate to life stage and circumstance. Next, the project team will examine in more detail how particular values are distributed among the communities. In the interim these preliminary results provide a snapshot of what is important about people’s lives in the Lakes Entrance region, which will need to be taken into account when developing responses to adapt to sea-level rise.

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Title:
A snapshot of the lived values of Lakes Entrance: results from a phone survey

Date:
2012

Citation:

Publication Status:
Published

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39716

File Description:
A snapshot of the lived values of Lakes Entrance: results from a phone survey

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