A snapshot of the lived values of Port Albert

Results from a mail-out survey

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 50 residents of Port Albert who completed the mail-out 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 may pose 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 April 2012 interviews were conducted with 17 households in Port Albert, Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Seaspray. The aim of the interviews was to develop an in-depth understanding of the things people value about living in these communities, we refer to these as ‘lived values’. The interviews revealed that there are at least 36 things that people value about living in Port Albert. The preliminary results of the interviews are available online:


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 Port Albert community; and
3) Which lived values are clearly more important than others.

To achieve these aims a mail-out survey was conducted in Port Albert in mid 2012. This report provides a summary of the results of the mail-out survey.

Methods
A mail-out survey was distributed to 112 post-boxes of people living in Port Albert and a further 105 were distributed to second home owners. In total, 50 surveys were completed and returned, 14 of which were second home owners. This represents response rates of 32.1% and 13.3% for principal and second home owners, respectively.

The survey was developed by researchers at the University of Melbourne.

The survey comprised 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 broader population of Port Albert, the survey respondents have similar levels of workforce participation and gender
balance. They also tend to be more middle-aged, have higher incomes, have post-
school qualifications and live in single adult households. These differences need to
be taken into account when interpreting the results; a diversity of values have been
captured here but the weighting given to these values may differ between the
survey respondents and adult population of Port Albert.

Connection to the area. On average each respondent has lived, or holidayed, in the
region for 19 years. Just over one-quarter have long-term family connections to the
area. The vast majority of respondents intend to continue living and holidaying in
Port Albert.

Lived values. There are 72 things that respondents independently mentioned that
they value about living in Port Albert. Of these, 44 overlap with the list of most
important lived values that were derived from the interviews. This means that an
extra 28 lived values were identified through the mail-out survey. These included:
the wildlife; opportunities for environmentally-friendly living; open spaces; block
size; and continuity of place.

The lived values identified by the greatest number of respondents and ranked as
very important by a majority of respondents are the peacefulness, being close to
water, the natural environment and feeling safe and secure. Also highly important
was the friendly community, and affordability of housing.

Frustrations. The main thing that respondents identified as frustrating them about
living in the Port Albert are the restrictions on development, limited footpaths,
limited public transport, lack of local council attention, poor drainage, and limited
access to medical services. Each of these frustrations were mentioned by more than
one respondent.

Day-to-day activities. The most popular outdoor activity that respondents undertake
in Port Albert is going for walks. Visiting the local shops is also a regular activity.
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 or book and using the computer for leisure.

Social relationships. Every week more than half the respondents spend time with
family and more than three-quarters spend time with friends. One-tenth of
respondents indicated that they do not have any close friends in Port Albert. More
than half the respondents have a few close friends and the majority of respondents
are members of at least one group or organisation.

Concluding remarks

The results presented in this report indicate that there is much that respondents value
about living in Port Albert. The greatest amount of agreement exists around features of
the natural environment, the peace and quiet and sense of security. 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. The next phase of the project
aims to examine in more detail how particular values are distributed among the
community. In the interim these preliminary results provide a snapshot of what is
important about people’s lives in the Port Albert 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 may pose 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 17 interviews with residents of Port Albert, Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Seaspray, conducted in April 2012. The preliminary results of the interviews are available online (http://abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/GippslandEast - Year 2 Project Report 2012).

The second step involved conducting a mail-out survey in August, September and October 2012. This report provides the preliminary results from the survey conducted in Port Albert.

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

Between August and October 2012 a mail-out survey was conducted in Port Albert that was completed by approximately three-tenths of households of permanent residents and one-tenth of second home owners.

In total, of the 217 surveys that were distributed 50 were completed and returned; 36 permanent residents and 14 second home owners. This indicates that the overall response rate is in the vicinity of 23.0%. This is a standard response for a mail-out survey without personalized follow-up letters1 (Dillman, 1978).

We believe that 30.3% (36/119) permanent households and 12.6% (14/111) of owners of unoccupied dwellings completed and returned the survey, based on data on occupied private dwellings from the 2011 Census.

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1 Given that we did not have any personal details we were unable to distribute personalized follow-up letters, which is known to increase response rates (Dillman, 1978). However, we did distribute follow-up post-cards to permanent residents, as suggested by Dillman (1978).
Participants reside across the suburb of Port Albert (Figure 1).

![Map of Port Albert with nearest intersections marked](image)

**Figure 1.** Nearest intersections (marked with dots) to where respondents lived or owned second homes.

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 lives in Port Albert on a permanent or temporary basis; the length of time they have been living in Port Albert; whether the respondent’s family had a connection to the area before moving; and whether they intend to continue living in Port Albert.

3. **Lived values.** This section included questions that aimed to determine whether there were any things people valued about living in Port Albert that had not been identified in the interviews conducted in April 2012. It also asked respondents to rank how important 31 qualities of Port Albert are to them. These 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 Port Albert; and their involvement in a range of 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 mail-out survey, comparisons are made between the people who responded to the survey and the usual adult population of Port Albert. Data from the 2011 Census (ABS, 2012), which are based on 222 permanent adult residents, are used for comparison. We include all 50 permanent and non-permanent respondents in our comparison due to the small sample size (so as to protect the anonymity of all respondents). Also note that the ABS adjust some values in small communities to protect confidentiality.

On average respondents’ households contained 2.2 residents, which is slightly higher than the average of 1.9 residents per household in the broader Port Albert population (ABS, 2012). None of the respondents identified as being indigenous, which is the same as the broader population (ABS, 2012).

### Gender

The gender makeup of the respondents was broadly comparable to the adult population of Port Albert. Women comprise 50% of respondents and 44.1% of the total adult population.

### Age distribution

Survey respondents covered a wide range of ages (Figure 2). However, 25-34 year olds were not represented, there was a small under-representation of 35-44 year olds and an over-representation of respondents in the 55-64 age group (ABS, 2012). This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results; the results reflect the values of a more middle-aged population than that of Port Albert.

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**Figure 2**: Age distribution of survey respondents and Port Albert adult population.
Figure 2. Age distribution of survey respondents and the adult population of Port Albert (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 mail-out survey only asked one question about educational attainment ("What is the highest level of education that you have completed?"). By comparison, the census asks two questions. The first is the highest level of schooling completed and the second is 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 Port Albert given that four-tenths (40%) of the respondents indicated that the highest level of education they attained was at school.

Comparing the 2011 Census data on highest level of education achieved against the responses indicates that the respondents tended to have more post-school qualifications compared to the broader population (Figure 3). This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results; the results reflect the values of people with more post-school qualifications than that of the adult population of Port Albert.

Figure 3. Highest level of education attained by survey respondents, who continued their education beyond high school, compared to the adult population of Port Albert (ABS, 2012).

**Income**

The household income of respondents was slightly higher than the broader population of Port Albert (Figure 4). Just under half (46%) of the respondents are on gross household incomes of $999 per week or less, compared to seven-tenths (69.7%) of Port Albert households.
Employment status

The employment status of respondents was broadly comparable to the adult population of Port Albert (Figure 5); four-tenths (40%) of the respondents were engaged in full-time or part-time work, compared to 35.6% in the broader population.

Figure 4. Gross weekly household incomes of survey respondents compared to Port Albert households (ABS, 2012).

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 adult population of Port Albert (ABS, 2012).
Household composition

The relationship among members of respondents’ households is somewhat comparable with the broader population (Figure 6). The main difference is that single person and single parent households are under-represented and couple and other household types are over-represented.

![Household composition chart](chart.png)

Figure 6. Relationship among members of respondents’ households and those of Port Albert households (ABS, 2012).

Overall, the socio-economic characteristics of the survey respondents have strong similarities with the broader population of Port Albert. The main differences are that the survey respondents are more likely to be middle-aged, have post-school qualifications, have higher incomes and are less likely to be in single adult households than the adult population of Port Albert. 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 19.2 years. Just over half (52%) definitely plan to continue living, or holidaying, in Port Albert and a further one-quarter (26%) probably will.

Permanent residents

The majority of respondents (72%) lives in Port Albert on a permanent basis and have done so for 20.0 years on average.

Just over one-tenth (11.1%) of the permanent respondents have lived in Port Albert all their lives, an average of 53.9 years. The remaining nine-tenths of the permanent residents moved to the region 15.1 years ago on average. Of these residents who moved to the region, almost three-fifths (59.4%) moved from a capital city (i.e. they can be considered to be sea-changers) and approximately one-fifth (18.8%) had a family connection to the area before they moved.
Second home owners

Just over one-quarter (28%) of respondents are second home owners, who have holidayed Port Albert for 18.2 years on average. This indicates that their length of connection to the area is similar to that of permanent residents overall.

Half of second home owners come from a capital city and almost half had a family connection to the area before buying a house.

Lived values

Respondents were asked to specify what is most important to them about living in Port Albert. This resulted in a list of 72 things that they value about living in the region (Table 1). We refer to these things as their lived values because they reflect many aspects of people's lives. The top six lived values that were mentioned by at least one-fifth of respondents were: the peace and quiet; the friendly people/community; being close to water; the natural environment; feeling safe and secure; and the fishing.

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 five lived values that had the highest number of ‘very important’ ratings were: feeling safe; affordability of housing; being close to water; peacefulness; and the natural environment.

There is considerable overlap between the lived values that appeared at the top of Table 1 and Figure 7. Specifically, peacefulness, being close to water, relaxed lifestyle, the natural environment and feeling safe and secure appeared in the top five of both lists.

Comparing Table 1 with Figure 7 reveals that 24 lived values are present in both lists (those in italics). A further 14 lived values in Table 1 correspond with lived values that were identified in the interviews but not raised during the survey (those with an asterisk). There are also 6 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 28 lived values above and beyond what was identified in the interviews (those that are not in italics and do not have an asterisk).

In addition to outlining what they value about living in Port Albert, some respondents identified things that frustrate them. This included:

- Restrictions on development and progress
- Limited footpaths
- Limited public transport
- Lack of local council attention/spending
- Poor and unsightly drainage
- Limited medical services
- Limited maintenance of the boat ramp
- Limited business opportunities
- Limited retirement activities
- Limited recreational opportunities
- Difficult to get around
- Professional fishing

Note that some of the things that some respondents valued were frustrations for others (Table 1 and Figure 7). Specifically, access to medical services, ease/difficulty getting around, local council support, and limited recreational opportunities.
Table 1. 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>Peace and quiet (tranquility)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Good holiday place for children</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The (friendly) community/people*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Great place to raise a family</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to water</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Healthy activities/lifestyle*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Natural) environment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Home†</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe and secure</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fishing†</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Medical facilities/services nearby</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (proximity to other places)†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Remoteness/isolation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Good) eateries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful/scenic area</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Access to decision-making*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/heritage*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Caring council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle (relaxed)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Groups in Yarram</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for recreational activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community connectedness†</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean environment and air*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community feel*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/services (e.g. shops)†</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Efficacy*</td>
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<td>Environmentally-friendly living</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping/caring community/neighbourly spirit</td>
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<td>Environmentally-friendly living</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging/community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Family support</td>
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<td>Walking paths/opportunities†</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Family visits</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspirations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Few permanent neighbours</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close to family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fishing industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close to friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Freedom*</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Family ties*</td>
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<td>Great accommodation</td>
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<td>Safe for children</td>
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<td>Safe waterway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block size</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business opportunities</td>
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<td>Untouched/pristine†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody knows everybody</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weather/climate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family likes it</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Work-life balance*</td>
<td>1</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 numbers for a lived value add to less than 50, 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.
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 this end we asked respondents about their daily, weekly and monthly activities.

There are a wide range of activities that survey respondents participate in (Figure 8 and Figure 9). 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 8). The exceptions to this are going for a walk, which tends to be a daily activity, and visiting the local shops, which tends to occur at least on a weekly basis. The activities that are participated in least frequently are participating in a team sport, playing golf, going to the gym and going for a jog.

![Figure 8: Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of year-round activities in Port Albert.](image)
In warmer months, gardening, visiting the beach and swimming are common activities undertaken by survey respondents at least once a week (Figure 9). Going surfing or bodyboarding are rarely, if ever, undertaken by respondents.

![Figure 9. Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of activities in warmer months in Port Albert.](image)

### Social relationships

When survey respondents were asked what is most important to them about living in Port Albert, the friendly people were the second most frequently mentioned lived value. Being close to family and friends were also nominated as being important (equal 20\(^{th}\) in Table 1).

When respondents were asked to rank the importance of 31 lived values, 34% and 56% 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 32% of respondents indicated that they did not live close to their family. However, 18% of respondents also did not live close to friends. For respondents who do live close to family and friends, 56.7% and 73.7%, respectively, indicated that this was important or very important to them.

The importance attached to friends and family is further reflected in the frequency with which respondents indicated that they spend time with various people (Figure 10). Family and friends were the two groups of people that respondents spent most time with.

After friends and family, respondents were more likely to spend time with neighbours and other members of the community than work colleagues outside of work or people who belong to groups or organisations that they belong to.
Given the importance of friends to respondents, it is important to note that one-tenth (10%) of respondents indicated that they do not have any close friends\(^2\) living in Port Albert and a further 12% of respondents indicated that they only have one close friend. The majority (64%) of respondents indicate that they have a few close friends and a minority (14%) indicated they have a lot (more than 10) of close friends nearby.

**Group membership**

The majority (82%) of respondents indicated that they are members of at least one group or organisation. Over half (56%) of the respondents indicated that they were a member of at least two groups and one-fifth (20%) indicated that they were a member of four or more groups.

Local community groups and sports and recreational groups, are the most popular groups (Figure 11). This is followed by: service; religious; and environmental organisations. Youth and education groups are the least popular.

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\(^2\) Close friends were defined in the survey as people one feels at ease with, can talk to about private matters or can call on for help.
Figure 11. 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 Port Albert. The greatest amount of agreement exists around features of the natural environment, the peace and quiet and feeling safe. 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. The next phase of the project aims to examine in more detail how particular values are distributed among the community. In the interim these preliminary results provide a snapshot of what is important about people’s lives in Port Albert, which will need to be taken into account when developing responses to adapt to sea-level rise.
