A snapshot of the lived values of Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach

Results from a mail-out survey

Project Team

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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 Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach, Port Albert 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 47 things that people value about living in Manns Beach and McLoughlins Beach. 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 communities; and
3) Which lived values are clearly more important than others.

To achieve these aims a mail-out survey was conducted in Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach, Port Albert and Seaspray in mid 2012. This report provides a summary of the results of the mail-out survey for Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach. Note that the people who responded from Robertsons Beach obtained the survey from those distributed in Port Albert. They are included in this report because the size and location of Robertsons Beach is more similar to Manns Beach and McLoughlins Beach than Port Albert.

Methods

A mail-out survey was hand-delivered to 131 houses in Manns Beach and McLoughlins Beach, many of which are holiday homes. 31 surveys were returned, eight of which were second home owners. There were an additional three surveys returned from Robertsons Beach.

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. Members of the Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach communities who responded to the survey tend to be later middle-aged, retired, couples and live on low incomes. More men than women completed the survey. These characteristics 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 the adult populations of these localities.

Connection to the area. On average each respondent has lived, or holidayed, in the region for 13.8 years. Almost one-third have long-term family connections to the area. The vast majority of respondents intend to continue living and holidaying in Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach or Robertsons Beach.

Lived values. There are 55 things that respondents independently mentioned that they value about living in Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach or Robertsons Beach. Of these, 47 overlap with the list of lived values that were derived from the interviews. This means that an extra 8 lived values were identified through the mail-out survey. These included: the wildlife; block size; lack of traffic; and observing subtle changes in the place over time.

The lived values consistently identified as very important by respondents is the peacefulness, being close to water, the natural environment, the recreational opportunities and the slow-paced life. Also highly important is the fishing, access to the beaches, and the supportive community.

Frustrations. The main things that respondents identified as frustrating them about living in Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach is the lack of local council attention, devaluation of houses, poor drainage, and lack of maintenance of key facilities, such as walking tracks and public toilets.

Day-to-day activities. The most popular outdoor activity that respondents undertake is going for walks. Visiting the local shops is also a regular activity. Visiting the beach and gardening are particularly popular in warmer months. Overall, the most frequent activities take place indoors. These include watching television and using the computer for leisure.

Social relationships. Every week two-fifths of respondents spend time with their family and almost four-fifths spend time with friends. Almost nine-tenths of the respondents have at least a few close friends living nearby and seven-tenths 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 people value about living in Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach. The greatest amount of agreement exists around features of the natural environment, recreational opportunities and the peace and quiet. Next, the project 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 Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach, 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 Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach, Port Albert 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 and September 2012. This report provides the preliminary results from the survey conducted in Manns Beach and McLoughlins Beach. It also includes responses completed by Robertsons Beach residents. Although Robertsons Beach is not included as a study site in the overarching project, given the geographical proximity of Robertsons Beach to the other two beaches and its similar size, we decided that it was useful to include these responses in this report. For the remainder of the report these three communities will be referred to as Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons. This is consistent with the way that interviewees referred to the localities during the interviews.

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

Methods

During August and September 2012 a mail-out survey was conducted in Manns and McLoughlins.

Of the 133 surveys that were distributed 31 were completed and returned. On returning to Manns and McLoughlins to deliver a reminder postcard it was noted that 36 surveys were still visible in letter boxes. This indicates that the response rate is in the vicinity of 32%. This is a standard response for a mail-out survey with a follow-up postcard (Dillman, 1978).

Of the 31 returned surveys, 23 were from permanent residents and 8 were from second home owners. It is difficult to establish whether this is representative because there are
no recent, locality-specific population data for Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons. This is because these localities are subsumed within larger statistical collection districts (ABS, 2012).

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

3. **Lived values.** This section included questions that aimed to determine whether there were any things people valued about living in Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons that had not been identified in the interviews conducted in April 2012. It also asked respondents to rank how important 31 qualities of Manns or McLoughlins (or Robertsons) 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 Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons; 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. Responses from all three communities are discussed together so as to protect the anonymity of respondents from these small communities.

**Socio-economic characteristics**

Ideally, we would compare the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents against the broader population of these three localities to determine how representative the group of respondents are. Unfortunately, due to the small size of these localities there is no locality-specific data available to make these comparisons. We therefore present the socio-economic characteristics of the respondent population so that it is clear whose lived values have been captured.
**Age distribution**

Survey respondents covered a wide range of ages (Figure 1); however, there were no respondents under 35 or over 85 years of age. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results; the results reflect the values of a middle-aged and elderly population.

![Age distribution](image)

**Figure 1.** Age distribution of survey respondents from Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.

**Education**

In Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons just over one-third (35.7%) of the respondents have university or vocational qualifications (Figure 2). Almost twice as many respondents (61.8%) completed their education at school.

![Education](image)

**Figure 2.** Educational attainment of survey respondents from Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.
Income

Almost three-fifths (58.8%) of the respondents are on gross household incomes of $999 per week or less, compared to one-fifth (20.6%) on $1000 or more (Figure 3). The remaining one-fifth of respondents did not indicate what their household income earns.

![Figure 3. Gross weekly household incomes of survey respondents in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.](image)

Employment status

Three-fifths (61.8%) of respondents are not currently engaged in work (Figure 4). Mostly, this is because they are retired or semi-retired. Just over one-third of the respondents are currently engaged in full-time or part-time work. This indicates that the results tend to reflect the values of a non-working population.

![Figure 4. Proportion of respondents engaged in full-time work, part-time work or not working (including those who are looking for work and retired) in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.](image)
Household composition

On average respondents’ households contained 1.9 residents; half of the respondents live in households with their partners, one-third live alone and the remaining respondents live with their children (Figure 5).

Other characteristics

Approximately two-fifths (38.2%) of the respondents were women. None of the respondents identified as being indigenous.

Overall, members of Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons communities who responded to the survey tended to be later middle-aged, retired, couples and live on low incomes. Also, more men than women completed the survey. These characteristics 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 populations of these localities.

Connection to the area

On average the respondents had lived, or holidayed, in the region for 13.8 years. Approximately three-quarters (76.5%) definitely plan to continue living, or holidaying, in Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons and a further one-seventh (14.7%) probably will.

Permanent residents

The majority of respondents (76.5%) live in Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons on a permanent basis and have done so for 11.3 years on average. Almost all of the respondents have moved to Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons; very few have lived in any of these communities all of their lives.
Almost half (46.2%) of respondents moved to Manns, McLoughlins or Robinsons from a capital city (i.e. they can be considered to be sea-changers) and almost one-quarter (23.1%) had a family connection to the area before they moved.

**Second home owners**

Almost one-quarter (23.5%) of respondents are second home owners, who have holidayed Manns, McLoughlins or Robinsons for 24.3 years on average. This indicates that their length of connection to the area is almost double that of permanent residents.

Half of second home owners come from a capital city and just over 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 Manns, McLoughlins or Robinsons. This resulted in a list of 55 things that they value (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 fishing; being close to water; the beach(es); the helping and caring community; and the relaxed lifestyle.

We then asked respondents to rate the importance of 31 lived values that we had derived from existing scientific research and the interviews (Figure 6). When ordered according to importance the five lived values that had the highest number of ‘very important’ ratings were: peacefulness; being close to water; feeling safe; affordability of housing; and the natural environment.

There is considerable overlap between the lived values that appeared at the top of Table 1 and Figure 6. Specifically, peacefulness, being close to water, the natural environment and recreational opportunities appeared in the top six of both lists.

Comparing Table 1 with Figure 6 reveals that 20 lived values are present in both lists (those in italics). A further 16 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 11 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 8 lived values above and beyond what was identified in the interviews (those that are not in italics and do not have an asterisk or a cross).

In addition to outlining what they value about living in Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons, some respondents also identified things that frustrate them. This includes:

- Lack of local council attention/spending
- Devaluation of houses
- Poor drainage
- Lack of maintenance of:
  - Footbridge
  - Walking tracks
  - Bus shelter
  - Public toilets
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</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No shops*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fishing†</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Small community size</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to water</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Away from the city</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beach(es)†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Block size</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping/caring/neighbourly community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community activities*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifestyle</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Community connections*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(relaxed/holiday)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Natural) environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serenity; relaxed atmosphere†</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scenery/beauty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking opportunities†</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (proximity to other places)*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational activities (e.g. boating)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Great place to raise a family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The (friendly) community/people*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Home*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Quaint) little village</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe and secure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean environment and air*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities (e.g. hall, playground, boat ramp)*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening†</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Restful†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good neighbours†</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rural-beach life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wildlife</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Safe for children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Slow pace of life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social interactions*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The sounds (surf)†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody knows everybody</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Untouched/pristine†</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family visits†</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weather/climate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of traffic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Importance of lived values. Bars indicate 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 34, 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 7 and Figure 8). The year-round activities that are undertaken the most frequently are passive activities such as watching television, using the computer for leisure, and reading a book or a newspaper (Figure 7). The exceptions to this are going for a walk, which tends to be a daily activity, and visiting the local shops, which tends to be a weekly activity.

The activities that are participated in least frequently are participating in a team sport, going for a jog, playing golf and going to the gym.

Figure 7. Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of year-round activities in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.
In warmer months, visiting the beach and gardening are common activities undertaken by most survey respondents at least once a week (Figure 8). Going surfing or body boarding is rarely, if ever, undertaken by respondents.

![Figure 8](image-url) **Figure 8.** Frequency with which survey respondents participated in a range of activities in warmer months in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons.

**Social relationships**

When survey respondents were asked what is most important to them about living in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons, the supportive community was the fifth most frequently mentioned lived value. Being close to friends and the friendly people were also nominated as being important (equal 11th in Table 1).

When respondents were asked to rank the importance of 31 lived values, 34.3% and 64.7% of respondents said that being close to family and friends, respectively, was important or very important. However, 23.5% and 14.7% of respondents indicated that they did not live close to their family or friends, respectively. This means that for respondents who do live close to family and friends, 46.2% and 75.9%, respectively, 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 9). Respondents indicated that they spend more time with their friends than any other group of people; almost half (44.1%) of the respondents spend time with friends every day.

After friends, respondents were more likely to spend time with other members of the community, family and neighbours than work colleagues outside of work or people who belong to groups or organisations that they belong to. It is important to recall here that only one-third of respondents are engaged in work (Figure 4). However, even for those
engaged in work, more than half (7/12) rarely or never catch up with work colleagues outside of work.

Close friends

Given the importance of friends to respondents, it is important to note that almost one-tenth (11.8%) of respondents indicated that have one or fewer close friends in their locality of residence. The majority (67.6%) of respondents indicate that they have a few close friends and a minority (17.6%) indicated they have a lot (more than 10) of close friends living in Manns, McLoughlins or Robertsons.

Group membership

The majority (70.6%) of respondents indicated that they are members of at least one group or organisation. Four-tenths (41.2%) of the respondents indicated that they were a member of at least two groups.

Local community groups and sports and recreational groups are the most popular groups (Figure 10). This is followed by religious; conservation; and arts organisations.

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1 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 10. Percentage of survey respondents in Manns, McLoughlins and Robertsons 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 Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach. The greatest amount of agreement exists around features of the natural environment, recreational opportunities and the peace and quiet. There are also a range of values that appear to be specific to particular groups of people within the community, which relate to interests, 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 Manns Beach, McLoughlins Beach and Robertsons Beach, which will need to be taken into account when developing responses to adapt to sea-level rise.
Bibliography


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