



Exchange Commentary



Relaunching the Climate Change Exchange



Over the years...

Back in late 2019, when the Climate Change Exchange (CCE) was launched on a cold autumn evening in Melbourne, we had no idea that Black Summer had already ignited up the coast – or that a global adaptation, the pandemic, was just three months away. Like many nascent organisations, CCE's adaptive response was to go quiet for five years.

But the animators and organisations engaged with CCE did not go quietly. We pivoted, working in various forms of adaptation across the community, legal, and philanthropic sectors. Over the last five years, new initiatives and networks have formed. As a result of these changes, we return with more experience, diversity, and commitment.



Climate change adaptation is more important now than it was five years ago.

Back then, it was the second child of climate justice – hiding in the shadows behind mitigation, struggling to find the right words to assert its importance. But it matters. Today, Australia and the world are experiencing the impacts of climate change in visceral, evident, and frighteningly frequent forms. Climate change is shaping our lives now and into the future.

To meet these compounding impacts, new roles have emerged across the landscape – intersecting with our changing climate in areas such as recovery and resilience, food security, legal assistance, planning and climate justice, data analysis and agriculture, emergency management, regenerative cultures, community engagement, health and infrastructure, digital access and community services. And the list continues to grow.

New organisations and initiatives – like Sweltering Cities and National Indigenous Disaster Resilience – reflect not only the challenges we face in a changing climate, but also the many ways we can collaborate to ensure no one is left behind.

In tandem with the growth of the adaptation and resilience 'industry', new research, best practice analysis, insights, and theories are emerging constantly. Adaptation is now embedded in our newsfeeds and social media – disguised in stories about rising insurance premiums, controversial developments, misplaced levees and dams, drought-stricken farming communities, cancelled music festivals, and disrupted major events.

Acknowledgement of Country



The Climate Change Exchange brings together scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers who are thinking, working, and acting towards justice and sustainability in a warming world. We therefore acknowledge that we live, work, and learn on Aboriginal land and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Ancestors, and to all Traditional Owners and Custodians of all lands and waters with which we live, work, and learn. Through the Exchange, we invite conversations and work that seek to honour our reciprocal obligations to Country and each other.



Everyone is adapting, whether we explicitly acknowledge it as climate-induced or not.

Governments are finally recognising the importance of adaptation. Climate risk registers and adaptation plans are being developed, consultations are underway, and inquiries are asking: "What is to be done?"



Much has changed in five years.

Personally, we went from launching the CCE and working in academia to roles in the community services and legal sectors – at the intersection of social justice and climate change. One of us now works on legal responses to disaster impacts, a role that didn't exist in the legal sector five years ago. Regardless of career labels, we still consider ourselves climate adaptation practitioners – with much to learn.

A common thread in both our roles – whether in community or legal sectors – has been the challenge of translating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into language and relevance for each field. This translation work is difficult, iterative, and vital. It can only be done relationally, carefully, and collectively.

In the community services sector, social justice is at the core. It makes sense to care for those most at risk when discussing the compounding impacts of climate change. COVID-19 revealed how critical community services are in the face of multiple crises – and how vulnerable they are without adequate support.

In the legal sector, there was a sense of uncertainty of how to approach this emerging issue – unfamiliar territory for lawyers and the ossified, century-old systems we work within. We came together to develop responses to this pressure, challenging our established ways of practising.

While the CCE went quiet officially, we leaned on its nascent network for support – sharing research, practice recommendations, experiences, and insights. After four years, the community legal sector collectively realised the need for translation tools ([Field Guide](#)). Across our sectors, communities of practice have grown. Adaptation practitioners increasingly rely on informal networks and webs of relationships to navigate the labyrinth of systems and information that can often overwhelm us.

More than ever, climate change adaptation practitioners need a space to come together – to exchange knowledge and experiences, connect with the latest research, and focus on justice outcomes for the communities we work with and for.

We've worn many hats and worked across silos. Adaptation can take you on a wild journey. Through it all, we've learned there are many ways of doing climate change adaptation.

The official definition is:

"The process of adjusting to actual or expected climate impacts by increasing public and private resilience through better decisions about managing our built and natural environments, while also seizing opportunities that arise from a changing climate."

The legal assistance sector translated this to:

"The process of adjusting to current or expected impacts of climate change. It involves adjusting behaviour, social systems and laws, and altering the built and natural environment to prevent climate risks and harm."





From a First Nations perspective,

this statement from a recent roundtable in Victoria and a communique from National Indigenous Disaster Resilience resonates deeply:

"Climate change makes everyone vulnerable. Yet within the context of a changing climate, and rapidly accelerating environmental hazards such as bushfires, floods and heatwaves, Aboriginal communities are disproportionately and uniquely impacted. Aboriginal peoples' experiences of disasters are defined by both entrenched disadvantage that drives vulnerabilities, and deep social and cultural resilience. Aboriginal communities are faced with the immense challenge of adapting once more, and they do so within the context of colonisation which has never ceased." – NIDR, 30 May

While there may be many different ways of defining adaptation – which can be challenging for policy and decision-makers – this diversity can also inform our collective work. It ensures we recognise the many ways of knowing, being, and doing in the process of adapting.

We have much to learn from sharing how we understand adaptation and what it means for our work, our communities, and the ecosystems we rely on. Equity and justice must be front and centre in all change processes.

It's now 2025.

While many of us are working in different ways to progress adaptation, for others, this may just be the beginning. As the adaptation community grows and matures, there is an even greater need to share what we're learning – to avoid reinventing wheels and build strength through collaboration.

So many practitioners and researchers have done incredible work over the past five years. But there's been a lack of space and time to come together and learn from one another.

We're excited to see the Climate Change Exchange reignite – and we look forward to the next phase of learning and action.



**The Climate
Change Exchange**



Contact us:
www.climatechangeexchange.org.au

The Climate Change Exchange exists to bring together research, policy and practice to build our collective capacity to create inclusive, just and transformative adaptation futures.

We create spaces for people to connect, grow their understanding and act to transform systems through building relationships and practicing adaptation together.



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Suggested citation

Moloney, S., Lay, B. (2025).
Relaunching the Climate Change
Exchange. Climate Change
Exchange Commentary.

