

Climate change to affect liveability of remote Australia

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People living in remote Australia are likely to be more severely affected by climate change than other sectors of the national population.

A new study, released today, by the CRC for Remote Economic Development (CRC-REP) and Ninti One warns that communities and outlying settlements on Cape York, in Central Australia and the Kimberley face greater risks to their wellbeing as the climate warms than people in other parts of Australia.

The study by the CRC-REP and CSIRO investigates the likely relationship between climate change and liveability (or state of wellbeing) of remote Australians.

"Globally, climate change is expected to bring a number of downsides for people generally – the spread of [tropical diseases](#), [mental health issues](#), allergy and [lung problems](#), water quality and availability issues, impacts on agriculture and [social cohesion](#)," Principal Research Leader, Dr Digby Race says.

"However the three areas we focussed on in remote Australia all have large populations of people with [poor health](#), infrastructure and [socioeconomic status](#), and many children.

"All these areas are predicted to get hotter under climate change, although the outlook for rainfall is still not clear.

"In general, urban centres like Broome, Kununurra and Alice Springs are less sensitive to the [impacts of climate change](#) due to their relatively high socio-economic status. Outside these urban areas, however, there are scattered small populations who may be more sensitive to these impacts than those in other parts of Australia.

"These are areas where socio-[economic disadvantage](#) is already high, there is a low tax base and poor service provision, and where most households are likely to have poor capacity to adapt to climate change – they will need help to make them more resilient."

Dr Race says resilience to climate change means a community is capable of absorbing and coping with the disturbances caused by the climate, and is able to reorganise itself while undergoing change so as to retain its identity and the way it functions.

"Vulnerable sub-populations in the most affected areas may manage climate change simply by moving, as desert people always have. However, we think it is possible that cultural attitudes and practises that helped remote Australians manage climate extremes in the past or present may not be sufficient under future climate change scenarios – especially where there is significant socio-economic disadvantage."

The involvement of local communities in managing change will be crucial – but the low taxpayer base in remote areas means that the resources to do so will often not exist.

The report proposes a series of principles to help remote communities adapt and become more resilient to climate change.

The study "Impact of climate change on health and wellbeing in remote Australian communities: a review of literature and scoping of adaptation options" is available on [www.crc-rep.com.au/resource/CW ...](http://www.crc-rep.com.au/resource/CW...)

[eHealthWellbeing.pdf](#)

Provided by CRC for Remote Economic Participation

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