

Rising sea levels force Pacific Island capital to relocate

19 August 2014, by Simon Albert



Solomon Islands provincial capital will be relocated to the mainland due to coastal hazards and the risks of rising sea levels resulting from climate change.

The University of Queensland worked with British Maritime Technologies WBM (BMT WBM) and Buckley Vann town planners to develop a comprehensive climate change adaptation plan to move the town of Taro, with a population of 800, to the adjacent mainland.

UQ School of Civil Engineering's Professor Tom Baldock said the community of Taro was under significant risk from tsunamis and ocean storms.

"As the capital of the Choiseul Province, Taro is less than two metres above [sea level](#), presenting a significant risk to the community, which will be compounded in the future with climate change and the resulting rise in sea levels," he said.

BMT WBM lead Project Manager Dr Philip Haines said the plan, which was prepared on behalf of the Australian Government, marked the first time a

Pacific Islands capital with all its services and facilities would be relocated due to coastal hazards and [climate change](#).

"Relocation is the only option available that will keep the community safe and will allow for future growth and prosperity of the capital and the province," he said.

The relocation of the capital, including schools, hospitals and businesses, will take many decades to complete, and the adaptation plan also aims to increase the community's resilience to coastal hazards, such as the preparation of a tsunami response plan.

A multi-disciplinary team of engineers, scientists and town planners consulted extensively with the Choiseul Bay communities to develop a vision and future town layout that reflected the needs and values of the local Luru people.

UQ's Dr Simon Albert led the community consultation and developed a management plan taking account of traditional practices and expertise.

Choiseul Province Premier Mr Jackson Kiloe thanked the team for respecting tradition.

"The project followed the ways of our traditions – talking with people, listening to people, and reflecting the desires of the people," Mr Kiloe said.

The project is now being hailed by the Solomon Islands National Government as a best-practice model for natural hazard resilience planning for other provinces across the Solomon Islands and more broadly across the Pacific region.

Provided by University of Queensland

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