

COPRRRA Session Summary

National and State approaches to relocation and retreat

10 February 2026



COPRRRA

Community of Practice on
Relocation, Retreat, and
Resilience in Australia

Overview of session:

COPRRRA's first session for 2026 brought together policymakers, researchers and frontline practitioners to explore how approaches to planned relocation and retreat are currently being shaped in Australia, and what this means for real world practice. 43 members joined the meeting and shared valuable insights on key challenges and how COPRRRA as a platform can help to address some of these gaps.

Presentations:

Dr Allie Mokany, Director, Climate Change Policy, Adaptation and Risk Division with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) presented on how relocation and retreat are referenced within the National Adaptation Plan and National Climate Risk Assessment, acknowledging that there is a need for a suite of adaptation options to be considered when addressing climate risk, and for some communities, this may mean considerations of relocation and retreat as one option. The presentation highlighted that strategies and plans will be needed to engage at risk communities and develop pathways to address climate risk and to keep communities safe.

Allie also highlighted DCCEEW's work at the local level through their 'Adaptation in Communities' stream. We heard about the recent establishment of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Climate Resilience Centre, where a number of measures are taking place, from the development of a multi-stakeholder steering group, to the establishment of climate resilience officers, as well as integrating Traditional Knowledge with western science and protecting data sovereignty and indigenous cultural and intellectual property. This example demonstrated a multi-level governance approach to adaptation and relocation planning.

Rebecca Price, Principal Policy Officer with Victoria's Department of Energy, the Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) then showcased the development of state-wide policy guidance and practical tools to inform planned retreat from coastal hazards and sea level rise. The project is funded through a DRF grant and seeks to establish state level policy directions, potentially informing future updates to Marine and Coastal Policy, and to provide tools that help place based decision makers determine when, where, and how retreat may be viable, while ensuring approaches are locally appropriate and actionable across Victoria. Key challenges identified include the need for clear and early stakeholder communication, managing expectations about the project's scope, limited funding for implementation, and the difficulty for councils and land managers to prioritise retreat amid competing pressures. At the same time, the work is creating valuable opportunities to build shared understanding, strengthen state-wide collaboration, clarify terminology, and better leverage existing policy and planning tools to support forward looking coastal adaptation.

COPRRRA Updates:

Jess and Annah provided an update on COPRRRA's recent activities, upcoming workplan and pipeline for 2026

- COPRRRA now has a logo and website which will soon have links to resources, reports and tools.
- There will be COPRRRA bi-monthly PULSE shared with news, articles and research on relocation and retreat - all members welcome to contribute.
- COPRRRA submitted an abstract for a panel discussion at the AIDR conference August 2026
- COPRRRA submitted a proposal for research grant to understand local government perspectives on barriers, enablers, and pathways for relocation / retreat planning in Australia – we'll reach out to LGA reps soon!

Our next online session in April will focus on local government and locally led approaches to relocation and retreat. Members are welcome to reach out if they would like to present. This will be followed by a June session on financing relocation and the insurance gap, and a session later in the year sharing international approaches.

SAVE THE DATE: We are also planning an in-person symposium and field visit in Brisbane on 2 and 3 September - more information will be shared in the coming months.

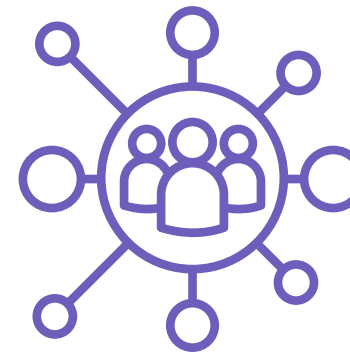
Potential COPRRRA Actions

At the end session, members had an opportunity to discuss enabling actions and what COPRRRA could do to help address some of these gaps and challenges. The group identified several actions, some of which are already being progressed by COPRRRA, others will require funding to progress, and in some cases, other stakeholders will be better placed to take forward. We'll communicate the actions that COPRRRA will take forward soon.



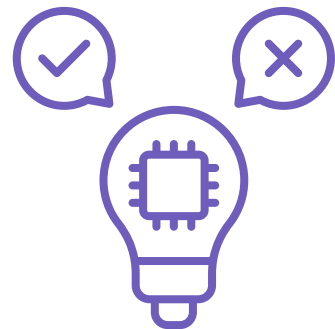
Knowledge Sharing, Collaboration and Partnerships

- Build a directory of COPRRRA members, including role, contacts, what they are working on etc to create collaboration and learning opportunities
- Map different stakeholders involved in relocation/retreat processes and engagement
- COPRRRA to act as a knowledge/resource hub for case studies and practice lessons
- Encourage members to share COPRRRA with 2–3 others to increase reach and engagement
- Strengthen Australia–NZ practitioner knowledge exchange (e.g., with Aotearoa Climate Adaptation Network)
- Facilitate alliances and relationship building to unlock funding opportunities
- Support local actors working on relocation / retreat through peer mentoring



Community centred communication tools and approaches

- Develop a relocation and retreat explainer (plain language glossary, terminology, visual)
- Develop a community conversations and narrative toolkit for communicating relocation/retreat
- Host a presentation / share case studies showing how relocation/retreat has been introduced to communities and how leaders built social licence to engage on issues
- Develop guiding principles for dignified, inclusive and community led relocation
- Elevate lived experience voices from people who have relocated or are in decision making processes in COPRRRA sessions (including First Nations perspectives)
- Consider sessions or activities on place-belonging and cultural and spiritual dimensions of place



Decision support and practical tools

- Host a session or develop a tool on decision pathways that looks at defend, adapt and retreat choices
- Develop a typology or visual representation of decision pathways on relocation/retreat



Finance and Insurance

- Host a finance and insurance focused session (funding models, insurance, non-economic costs)
- Highlight methods for valuing non-economic loss