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## Planning for contingencies

We lead issue 137 with a Focus on sea-level rise predictions and their implications for Australia over the next decades.

International research, including that by CSIRO (see page 4), is showing that both greenhouse gas emissions and sea-level rise rates are currently tracking towards the upper end of IPCC projections. This effectively means that authorities will need to be focusing on the trend toward significant sea-level rises by the middle of the century and associated impacts for Australian coastal communities.

While it is clear that there is still much uncertainty among experts as to how to represent sea-level rise projections in public information, some leading researchers are calling for more emphasis on the increasing risk of higher than expected rates of rise.

On pages 14–17, Wendy Pyper canvasses the views of some of Australia's leading international authorities on sea-level rise, most of whom contributed to recent IPCC assessment work, to gauge the likelihood of high level rise impacts. She also reviews some of the planning measures already being undertaken by local and national authorities to prepare for possible impacts.

CSIRO's work to show that Australia's emissions over the last 25 years have grown at twice the rate of the US and Japan, and five times the rate of Europe, highlights the challenge of significantly cutting emissions. Contrary to common views that predict negative impacts to Australia's economy from concerted greenhouse gas reduction policy, on page 11 CSIRO's Benjamin Preston and Roger Jones review the benefits to the economy of early climate action.



Their findings are supported by the main theme of this year's National Business Leaders Forum on Sustainable Development: that, with an appropriate structure,

Australia could become a carbon reduction specialist, taking advantage of a massive new US\$15 trillion international carbon economy. But we must seize current chances and act quickly, with business taking the lead.

On pages 28–30, Max Berry reports on the need for more comprehensive management of groundwater supplies, as unbridled demand outpaces metering infrastructure and fragmented regulation. With little known about groundwater impacts, experts are calling for immediate measures.

Similarly, on pages 20–23, Gail Liston-Burgess reports on the demise of the Ramsar-listed Macquarie Marshes in NSW. Over 10 years, the drought has exacerbated the impact of excessive water demand by rural interests, leaving a key habitat severely degraded. What can be learned from this about management priorities?

Enjoy your reading.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor



Greg Rinder, CSIRO Land and Water

## Next, in issue 138

We review the progress of natural sequence farming trials and report on an initiative by key ecologists to map national vulnerabilities and inform policy.

The August–September issue will be produced by Acting Managing Editor Mary-Lou Considine while James Porteous is absent on a working project with WWF and the American Red Cross in South-East Asia.