

Centre of Austronesian Studies (COAST) EXHIBITION REPORT

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC



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The Centre of Austronesian Studies (COAST) aims is to facilitate research exchange among Austronesian speaking nations.

With a total population of c. 400 million speakers, the principle connection is in their intuitive recognition.

As an ethnolinguistic group of peoples in Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and East Africa, the study of indigenous peoples is inseparably connected to the study of the Asia Pacific region.

COAST plays an important role in maximising research impact on indigenous peoples by bridging academic disciplines and regions.

COAST is nestled under the Institute for the Study of the Asia Pacific (ISAP) which serves as the umbrella institute for Asia Pacific Studies at the University of Central Lancashire.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

From the 5th to the 26th of February 2022 the Centre of Austronesian Studies (COAST) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), UK, hosted an exhibition which explored the impact of climate change within the Asia Pacific region.

The show took place at UCLan's PR1 Gallery at its Preston campus.

Artists and documentarians were invited to participate from across the UK, Europe and Asia Pacific region through partners and ISAP networks. Funding for the exhibition was secured from ISAP and the Arts and Humanities Research Academy (AHRA) at the University.



Rationale

The latest IPCC report (2021) on climate change states that: 'The scale of recent changes across the climate system as a whole and the present state of many aspects of the climate system are unprecedented over many centuries to many thousands of years.'

'Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened.'

Furthermore, 'global mean sea level has risen faster since 1900 than over any preceding century in at least the last 3000 years. The global ocean has warmed faster over the past century than since the end of the last ice age' (around 11,000 years ago).

'Surface open ocean pH as low as recent decades is unusual in the last 2 million years', meaning the oceans are becoming more acidic. These factors are having a major impact on the flora and fauna of our oceans and the communities that depend on them. In the Asia Pacific region, small island nations are on the front line of these intense climatic impacts. How are we to respond to this crisis? Surely the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced...

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Previous climate change communication has emphasised the global catastrophic impacts on humans and the environment (Feldman and Hart, 2016; Nisbet, 2009), leaving citizens feeling helpless and at a loss concerning what to do about the climate emergency (O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009).

In a climate moderate country based within North Western Europe, the population of the UK is still relatively untouched by the horrific impacts of the climate emergency.

Therefore, the population remains largely unengaged with the subject, still viewing it as an abstract or far away concept.

How can we make the effects of the climate crisis more personally relevant to people living on the other side of the world from where those impacts are taking place?



Climate Change in the Asia Pacific

An exhibition of artwork and poetry which paints a picture and tells the stories of those nations and communities on the front line of the climate crisis

07 / 02 / 22 - 25 / 02 / 22

PR1 Gallery, Victoria Building, University of Central Lancashire
EXHIBITION LAUNCH EVENT 21 / 02 / 22 - 17:00 ONWARDS

GUEST SPEAKERS:
Dr Rosiana Lagi, Deputy Head, School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE), University of the South Pacific
Professor in Asia Pacific Studies, Niki Alsford, Head of UCLan's Institute for the Study of the Asia Pacific (ISAP)
Bob Walley, Deputy Chair for Centre of Austronesian Studies (COAST) and exhibition curator

Presented by COAST in partnership with the University of the South Pacific

Logos for the University of the South Pacific, COAST, and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) are also present.

Invitations were opened for artists to respond to the questions posed by this unprecedented situation and produce or send previously completed pieces of artwork that can communicate these impacts to a wider audience.

The aim of the exhibition was to effectively tell the story of the impacts on people who are experiencing these extraordinary changes throughout the Asia Pacific region, enabling audiences to build emotional connections and a sense of agency.

Responses could be in the form of visual artwork using any preferred medium, which could include, painting or drawing, photography, print, digital media, poetry, storytelling and audio recordings.

Invitations were especially extended to artists from, or based in, the Asia Pacific region who could perhaps bring a unique perspective to this subject. Exhibition curator Bob Walley stated "We believe this is a crucial story which is needs to be told".

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

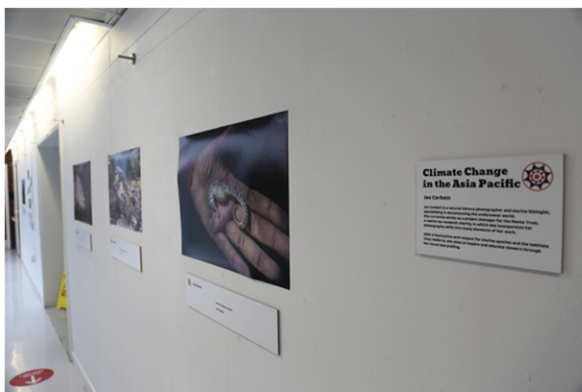
Participation in the final exhibition came from:

The School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education (SPACE) based at the University of the South Pacific who submitted a film showing the indigenous knowledge of extreme weather or climate change indicators described in interviews with island community elders from Tuvalu.



The University of the South Pacific Oceania Centre and Viti Association of Visual Artists (VIVA) who submitted a film of the 'Winds of Change' virtual exhibition, a collection of Pacific island based artists work showing various responses to challenges facing islands and artwork inspired by cultural identity and history.

Marine Photographer Jasmine Corbett and the Manta Trust, who submitted a series of photographs from Cambodia and the Maldives showing the impacts of unsustainable fishing practices and marine wildlife that are threatened by climate change.



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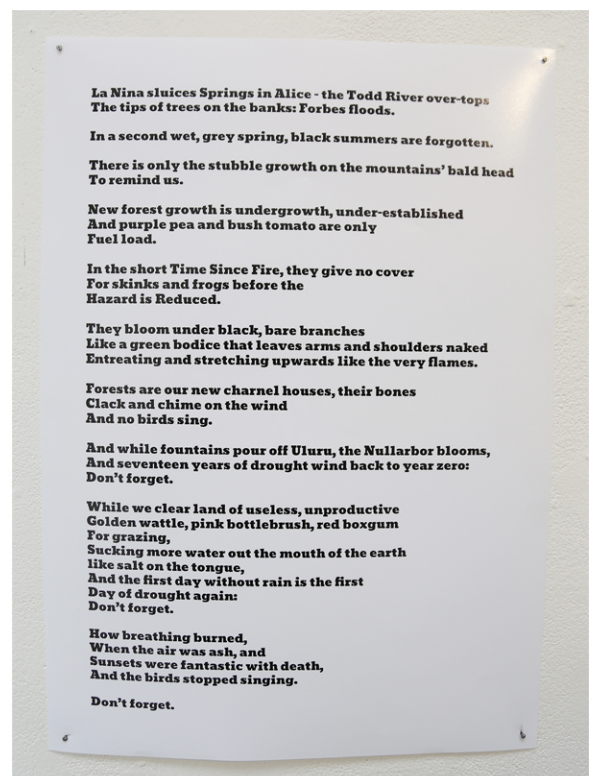
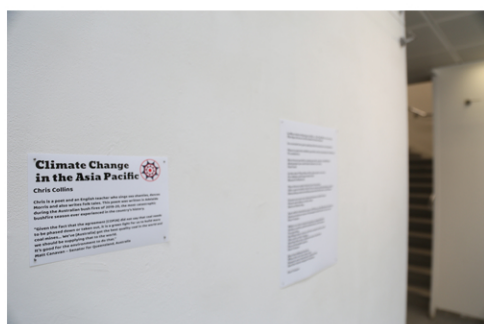
The Big Steppe Mongolia expedition team submitted a series of photographs showing the changing environmental landscape of the country due to climate change and its effects on livestock herders and the centuries old Mongolian way of life.



Australian based poet Chris Collins submitted a poem during the Australian bush fires of 2019-20, the most catastrophic bushfire season ever experienced in the country's history. The poem articulates the dangerous conditions caused by intensifying wildfire phenomena and draws attention to the Australian governments agenda during this crisis. This is highlighted in the quotes Chris used:

"Given the fact that the agreement [COP26] did not say that coal needs to be phased down or taken out, it is a green light for us to build more coal mines... We've [Australia] got the best quality coal in the world and we should be supplying that to the world. It's good for the environment to do that."

Matt Canavan – Senator for Queensland, Australia



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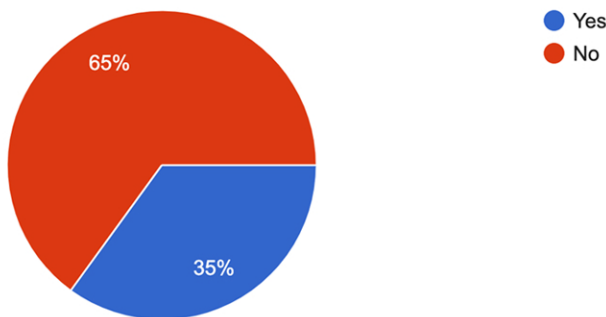
Manchester based artist John Paul Brown submitted images which represent two major threats to ocean habitats and Asia Pacific island based communities. A digitally altered photograph presented sea level rise as described by islanders in the Maldives who have started to notice the accelerating threat to their homelands. Another photograph showed an installation describing the impact of plastic pollution on marine environments



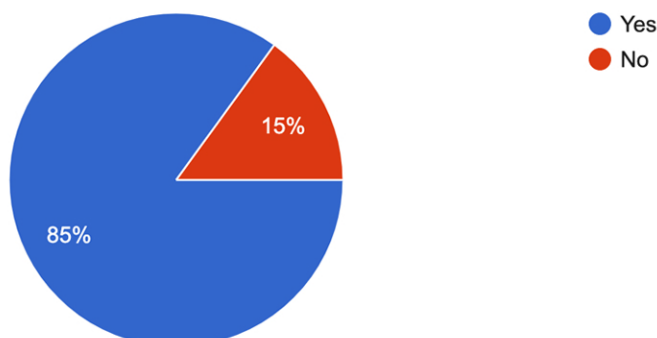
EXHIBITION IMPACT EVALUATION

During the exhibition attendees were encouraged to respond to the artwork by filling out a short online questionnaire. 20 people participated and the results are as follows:

Did you know much about climate change in the Asia Pacific before seeing this exhibition?
20 responses



Has this exhibition taught you anything about climate change in the Asia Pacific that you did not know already?
20 responses

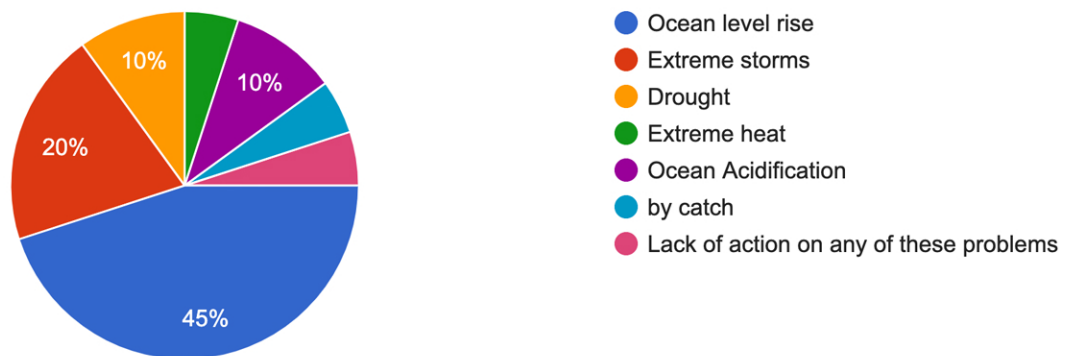


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EXHIBITION IMPACT EVALUATION

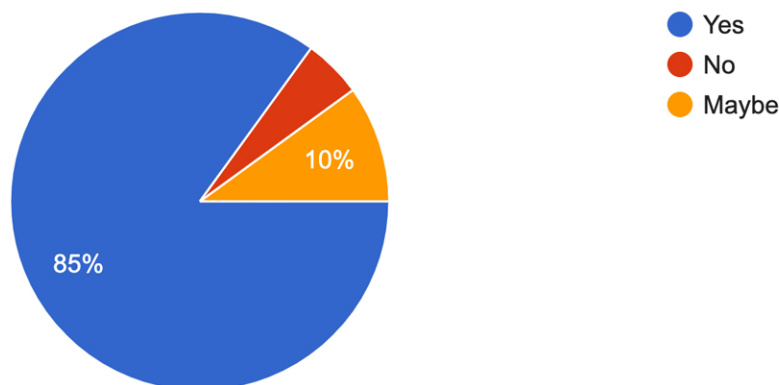
What do you think is the biggest risk for those living on islands in the Pacific?

20 responses



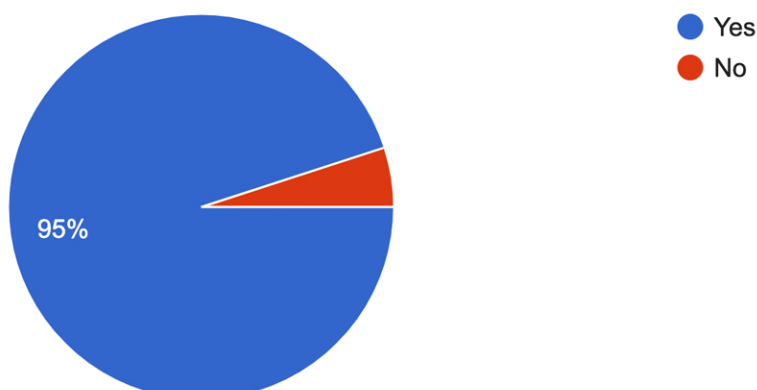
Do you think Western countries have a responsibility to help those suffering from the effects of climate change in the Asia Pacific?

20 responses



Would you like to see UCLan doing more about climate change in the Asia Pacific?

20 responses

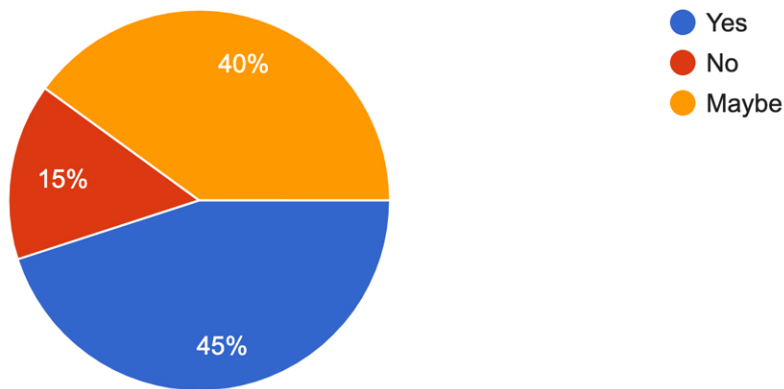


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EXHIBITION IMPACT EVALUATION

Would you be interested in getting involved in research projects about climate change in the Asia Pacific?

20 responses



The results of this questionnaire provides valuable data on participating attendees levels of awareness of climate change in the Asia Pacific.

Questionnaire results show that the exhibition increased 85% of participating attendees knowledge of impacts in this area. Participating attendees view ocean level rise as the greatest threat to Pacific islands and so show awareness that many Pacific Islands and their communities are under threat. Interestingly, participating attendees also think there is a need for UCLan and Western countries from the global north to respond to this issue. 95% of participating attendees thought UCLan should do more research in this area. 45% of participating attendees also showed interest in taking part in related future research projects and were invited to contact exhibition curator Bob Walley if they wanted to be involved in any such initiatives.

This data highlights and supports further research projects on climate change in the Asia Pacific.

Therefore, this report recommends that future research is done on the responsibility and obligation for heavy greenhouse gas emitting organisations and countries from the Global North to support mitigation and adaption across the Asia Pacific.

References

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