



Commissioned by Auckland Council

Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water: Media analysis

An analysis of public communications in New Zealand news media on climate change adaptation.

Feb 2023

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About The Workshop

[The Workshop](#) is a not-for-profit narrative research and strategy organisation based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa New Zealand. At The Workshop, we undertake research into public mindsets and narratives about complex economic, environmental, and social issues. Public mindset shift is key to building support for initiatives that will make the biggest difference to repairing, building and maintaining connected, caring, inclusive communities and thriving ecosystems. Our methods involve identifying and testing narratives that deepen public thinking and shift shared mindsets on complex issues. We provide evidence-based narrative and framing support to people researching, advocating for, and implementing better systems. With the support of our funders we make our research publicly available.

This report was Prepared by Dr Minette Hillyer, Senior Narrative Advisor at The Workshop, on behalf of Auckland Council.

Scope and purpose of this report

This report was prepared in February, 2023, and summarises research conducted by The Workshop between April, 2022 and February, 2023. It contributes to the second phase of our work on Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water.

This report summarises our analysis of public communications about the water-related impacts of climate change, with a focus on narratives, frames, values, and associated language. It is part of a larger project providing narrative and framing advice to Auckland Council to deepen public understanding about the problems and solutions of climate change-induced flooding, inundation, and erosion. It supports the Council's work to help local communities understand the risks associated with the water-related impacts of climate change, and their role in mitigating those risks. In particular, the Council's objective is to encourage Aucklanders to **engage** with Council in planning for, and adapting to the water-related impacts of climate change on their homes, properties, and communities.

The research project is therefore designed to deliver insights into mindsets and narratives to do with the water-related impacts of climate change that will play a part in Aucklanders' willingness to engage with Council. This covers:

- the mindsets and narratives that currently influence Aucklanders' understanding of the issue, and
- the behaviours and mindsets people need to have to be active participants in mitigating the risks associated with the issue.

This report represents one part of our research toward the first of these objectives: that is, **to gain insight into the mindsets and narratives that currently influence Aucklanders' understanding of the water-related impacts of climate change**. We understand that our analysis of public communications should focus particularly on narratives and associated language used by those opposed to recommended actions.

The action the Council seeks to promote is engagement; as a consequence, our analysis pays particular attention to narratives and frames which are likely to discourage engagement.

The intention of this report is to provide a time-limited view of relevant public communications about the water-related impacts of climate change in this period: a snapshot, rather than a comprehensive account. For this phase of our research, we have concentrated on media coverage of two significant news events. The first was the release of the National Adaptation Plan in August, 2022 and the second the Anniversary Weekend floods in late January and the subsequent impact of Cyclone Gabrielle on Auckland and other areas in the north and east of the North Island in early February, 2023. The report also includes quotes taken from a series of expert interviews that we conducted from September to October, 2022, which we include to place our public communications analysis in a broader context. It is accompanied by a review of the international framing literature about climate-change adaptation, and can be read together with that review.

Definitions of some key terms

In this report - and in our work in general - we make use of four key terms: mindsets, frames, narratives, and values.

'Mindsets' are dominant, largely invisible assumptions that are shared within a culture. They take the form of myths and narratives, values and presumptions, and simple understandings. People living in a culture draw on mindsets to know what is 'normal,' or 'a problem,' how the world works, or how our society is organised. Most of the time, we're not particularly conscious of our shared, cultural mindsets. They are like the water we swim in. Mindsets are revealed in our communication, in narratives and stories. Mindsets might also be referred to by other names, like mental models or cognitive schemas.

A **'frame'** is a feature of communication. It offers a pre-made way of defining reality to help us make sense of objects and experiences. Frames feature in all communication as culturally shared, taken-for-granted ways of making sense of information. A frame, singular, is a neurological association between specific concepts and people's mindsets. Single words can be frames, but so can phrases, metaphors, images, or even music. Frames differ from topics: they are about defining how an issue is presented, what is and isn't emphasised, how it's explained, and what connections people are encouraged to make in their own thinking. A frame is built over years of living, talking, and listening - it reveals the narratives at work in our culture.

In narrative work, **'framing'** is a term that's used to describe how people who communicate construct a point of view, either consciously or unconsciously. Framing offers a way to see an issue that activates particular ways of thinking about, or interpreting information or the facts of the matter. 'Framing' describes the choices we make - when communicating on particular topics - about what to say and how to say it.¹

'Narratives,' in our work, describes patterns of meaning in our communication that tie together different stories and reflect mindsets. Narratives are culturally specific: they both reflect, and shape our shared mindsets. A narrative is a broad, overarching story - like 'boy meets girl,' or 'success comes from hard work' - that can be expressed through any number of individual stories. At The Workshop, we refer to narratives as 'golden threads,' because of their role in bringing together many stories with the same broad meaning.

'Values' are the principles or standards that inform our actions and beliefs. They can be described as our 'why' of life, or our core human motivations - like love, security, power, responsibility, or creativity. Values are a feature of all our communications because they make the case for why people should pay attention to us. The values we often draw upon in our habituated communications are those that are dominant in our information environment. However, everyone holds a mixture of values, and different values can be surfaced by using different frames and narratives. At The Workshop, our understanding of values is shaped by Schwartz's and others' work on 'basic human values,' and its adaptation for advocacy work by [Common Cause](#).²

¹ Chong and Druckman, "Framing Theory"; Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment."

² Schwartz, "An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values."

Method

News media as a site for public communication

This report analyses narratives, frames, values, and language used to communicate about climate change adaptation in news media originating in Aotearoa New Zealand and available to a broad general public through dedicated online sites. Coverage of a significant topic or event in the news media can be said to reflect and to influence public thinking and understanding in ways which extend beyond the topic or event itself. As well as ‘the news,’ news media produce ‘images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work.’³ Even in the choice of what to cover - the description of an event as ‘news’ - the news media provides the public with a powerful means of making sense of the world and their place in it. This means that local news media coverage of climate change-related events provides frames for public understanding that exceed knowledge of climate change as a topic. News media coverage provides a source of insight into **how people think** in relation to this issue, demonstrating shared public narratives and the public mindsets they reflect. These narratives and mindsets, in turn, contribute to Aucklanders’ willingness and ability to engage with Council.

News media is not the only form of public communication. Any individual’s access to the news media always occurs in the context of their larger experience of public life. Nor is the news media necessarily the first, or most prominent source of information for the New Zealand public. This is particularly evident when it comes to young people, who tend to get their news online from international sources and via multi-purpose platforms.⁴ Alternative sources of insight into public communication about newsworthy topics and events include various kinds of social media, streaming video-on-demand, radio, or television.

For the purposes of this research, online news sources that are widely available in New Zealand and are associated with local, news-specific organisations were chosen.⁵ Our choice of sources reflects a variety of research considerations and priorities:

- the role news media platforms play for large sectors of the public as trusted and influential sources of information and understanding, particularly in relation to significant, timely, and traumatic events experienced locally;
- the intention to find public communications about climate change and climate change events that specifically reflected New Zealanders’ experiences and ways of communicating;
- the value for Council - or local government - in understanding frames and narratives communicated and accessed locally;
- the ease of accessing online news media platforms within the constraints of this research project; and,
- the ethical and procedural questions surrounding the quasi-public nature of social media platforms, which - while they appear to welcome a diversity of the public - have the potential to exclude people, and to favour strong opinions and attitudes in contrast to the more deeply-held and complex understandings and mindsets that our work seeks to access.⁶

This analysis provides insights into public thinking about the water-related impacts of climate change to sit alongside the other research activities that make up our work on Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water. Because our intention with this report is to provide a 'snapshot' of relevant public narratives, frames, and values, our coverage of public communications is not intended to be comprehensive and should not be read in that way.

What we did

We gathered news reports related to the local impacts of climate change on Tāmaki Makaurau, and Aotearoa New Zealand in general, between April, 2022 and August, 2022, and again over the roughly three week period from 30 January to 20 February, 2023. The different time frames relate to the different amount of news coverage on the issue that was generated in each period.

Following this period of data gathering the news sources were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, and from this process we identified frames, narratives, values, and language used to communicate about the water-related impacts of climate change, and the public mindsets they refer to.⁷ This analysis focused on written texts, and static images, rather than on any accompanying video or audio content, and on the 'news' content, rather than on any accompanying comments from readers. Comments from the public that formed a part of the news report were included in the analysis. Where someone is quoted in a news report in their private capacity, we have not included their name in this report.

³ Hall, "Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media [1981]."

⁴ "Where Are The Youth Audiences? 2022 Full Report"; "Younger Audiences Slip Away from Local Media."

⁵ Note that the New Zealand Herald operates a mixed model, with some 'Premium' content behind paywalls. Some of the communication analysed in this report is part of that 'Premium' content. This is identified in the report. All of the other sources analysed are free to access.

⁶ A similar claim can be made about 'comments sections' in online news reports, which are restricted by article type or by paywalls, and which can attract a limited pool of commenters. While comments sections are useful sources of insight in many research projects, for these reasons, and appropriate to our research focus, we have not included them in our analysis here.

⁷ Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*.

What we looked at

For this project, we focused on reports from general-interest news media originating in New Zealand and available online. This included both regular news reporting and editorial or opinion pieces, and local and national news.⁸ In our analysis of the January-February, 2023 weather events, in order to manage the quantity of news coverage published we focused on communications from four primary sources. We chose these sources because of their prominence in our media landscape, and their accessibility to a broad, general public. These were:

- stuff.co.nz and nzherald.co.nz, which dominate the news media in Aotearoa-New Zealand online (and in print);⁹
- rnz.co.nz, which summarises the broadcast radio content produced by RNZ. In 2022, RNZ reported the strongest level of public trust and the lowest level of mistrust among media organisations in New Zealand. It was a particularly valued source of information and commentary during the flooding and cyclone events of early 2023 when some communities' only receive or share information via the radio;¹⁰ and
- thespinoff.co.nz, which aims to serve a larger youth audience than other media organisations in Aotearoa but is nonetheless locally produced, freely available, and regularly updated. Fifty percent of The Spinoff's readership lives in Auckland. In addition, it may attract readers interested in climate change because of its commitment to offer coverage of the issue alongside other public science topics.¹¹

We have not attempted to analyse an equal number of reports from each source. Rather, we treat them all as forming part of the same pool of public communications.

Why we analysed news media reports as examples of public communications

We focused our research for this report around two events which resulted in an increase in public communication in the news media about the water-related impacts of climate change. The first - the release of the government's National Adaptation Plan in August, 2022 - was planned, while the second - the Auckland Anniversary Weekend flooding and subsequent impact of Cyclone Gabrielle in January-February, 2023 - was not.

It might be argued that the weather events that occurred in January - February, 2023 are 'out of the ordinary,' and because of this not representative of the amount and kind of public communications about climate change that Aucklanders would usually encounter. There are several ways to answer this concern.

- First, the news cycle by definition prioritises 'breaking' news, rather than 'ordinary life.' The news media's focus on what is 'out-of-the-ordinary' provides a useful insight into the dominant frames and narratives that we measure our lives against. **One function of the news is to tell us what 'ordinary' means.**
- In more practical terms, a news event results in more public communications to analyse. While an absence of public commentary can tell us about the priority placed on particular issues, it cannot tell us about the subject we are most interested in: **the language people use, and the frames, narratives, and values people draw on when they do talk.**

- Finally, we understand that climate change-related weather events are becoming more frequent, meaning that we might expect to see more coverage of these events as a feature of our public communications. A longer, more extensive research project could offer more insights into the forms that coverage might take, particularly if climate change-related weather events come to be seen as ‘more ordinary’ than they currently are. This aside, **the intention of this research is to gain insight into public thinking as it is**, making news media coverage a rich, timely source of insight into public thinking and understanding.

For this analysis, that insight is drawn from a number of features of the news report, all of which play a part in our understanding of what ‘ordinary’ means, or ‘how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work.’¹² These include the topic of the report, the way in which it is classified on the news site (under ‘Opinion,’ or ‘Politics,’ for instance), the headline, any images, the use of language - in particular, metaphors - and the decisions made about who to quote and what to prioritise.

⁸ Our sources included *Stuff*, *The New Zealand Herald*, *RNZ*, *The Spinoff*, *The Conversation*, *Newshub*, *Newsroom*, and *1News*

⁹ “2.8 Million New Zealanders Read Newspapers and Nearly 1.7 Million Read Magazines in 2022 - Roy Morgan Research”; Edmunds, “Stuff Maintains Its Dominance of New Zealand News Market.”

¹⁰ “RNZ.”

¹¹ “The Spinoff Media Kit – Q4 2020”; Park, “The Spinoff’s Young, Urban Audience Embraces News Media Membership”; Institute, “The Spinoff.”

¹² Hall, “Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media [1981].”

What we found in the news media about the local impacts of climate change

Topics and contexts: April- August, 2022

News media coverage from this period responded to the National Adaptation Plan, which was released in draft form for public consultation on 27 April, 2022 and in its final form on 3 August, 2022. While this coverage responded to news events - the release of the plan, for instance, or public commentary from the Insurance industry - it was released at a measured pace, and the reporting included more long-form articles, analyses, and investigations than might feature in coverage of more urgently breaking news.

The topics of the reports we analysed from this period fall into six broad groups:

- the National Adaptation Plan and the public consultation process;
- local communities already engaged in planning for adaptation, with a particular focus on consultation processes, the relationship between local (and sometimes central) government and community members;
- residents' experiences of the impacts of climate change in coastal communities, framed in relation to proposed adaptation measures;
- insurance, and the insurability of particular areas or properties;
- public opinion, with a particular focus on the question of who was, or would be responsible for taking action to adapt to the water-related impacts of climate change; and,
- managed retreat, in the form of case studies of Matatā

The reports appeared in a variety of contexts on their sites: Business, Climate or Environment, as a feature article, Housing or Infrastructure, Local Democracy reporting, Opinion, Politics, and Weather. The largest number of reports had as their main focus either the National Adaptation Plan itself or local government, and the largest percentage were found in the Climate or Environment section of their site.

Topics and contexts: January-February, 2023

News media coverage of the impacts of climate change in January-February, 2023 responded to an immediate, unexpected, and unpredictable event and as a consequence was more abundant and more reactive than that seen in response to the release of the National Adaptation plan the year before. For the purposes of this

analysis, and because of how they featured in the news cycle, we are treating the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and the impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle as one ‘news event.’

Like coverage of the National Adaptation plan, coverage of this event included reports about insurance, local government, managed retreat, the National Adaptation Plan, and the experience of residents in their local communities. We did not encounter any reporting from this period primarily focused on public opinion either about what was happening or about climate change in general, which is likely a response to the urgent, and traumatic nature of the events. In addition, we found a number of other prominent topics in the reporting on this event which did not appear as a primary focus in the reporting in response to the National Adaptation Plan. In order of the quantity of reports we found, these are:

- community experiences, or community responses to the floods or to Cyclone Gabrielle;
- urban planning, generally in the discussion of specific problems or solutions (building on flood plains, or the ‘sponge city’);
- future planning, offering a mixture of analyses and advice about responsibility, particular solutions, or planning processes; and
- central government, again through a mixture of reports on Government action in response to the event, and analyses of responsibility for adaptation.

We found several reports about the event that focused on te ao Māori and on infrastructure, two each on climate change and managed retreat, and single reports on voting behaviour, media coverage of the event, and mental health. In addition to the areas where we found climate change reporting in 2022, reports were filed under Analysis, Editorial, National or New Zealand, Tourism, and Transport, with some appearing in site-specific categories (eg. Mediawatch on *RNZ* or Pou Tiaki on *Stuff*). The largest number of news reports from this period had as their focus community and urban planning, closely followed by future planning, residents, government, and then local government; the largest percentage of reports were found under National / New Zealand or Politics, followed by Opinion.

What are the frames we found in public communications about climate change in the news media?

The following frames appeared in the news media reporting about climate change that we analysed. During the period of analysis, different frames assumed different prominence. However, some were used consistently throughout. Stories often employ multiple frames, and many of the frames we found are mutually supportive.

Who pays?

This frame asserts that what matters most about climate adaptation measures is the cost.

It appeared early, and frequently in the coverage of the National Adaptation Plan, both when the plan was out for consultation, and when it was released in its final form.¹³ It was presented, in general, as the question which was absent from the plan, affecting its credibility; it also took the form of questions about insurance and property transfer which might arise as a consequence of the kinds of events and situations that the plan addressed. ‘Who pays?’ also featured as a frame in coverage of the January-February weather events, first in the form of residents’ complaints about poor investment in infrastructure (including threats to seek financial redress in the form of class action), and more prominently in commentary about the insurability of flood-prone houses which began to appear about a week and a half after the Anniversary Weekend floods.¹⁴ The framing reappeared in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, as attention began to shift slightly from the immediate trauma caused by the Cyclone toward its effect on regional economies, particularly in relation to roading and other damaged infrastructure.¹⁵ Some stories used this frame to suggest that any meaningful action in relation to climate change adaptation, and any meaningful impact arising from it, would be financial: that the ‘crisis’ we are facing is primarily about ‘who pays.’¹⁶

Tough choices

This frame implies that climate change adaptation is defined by what we’ll give up.

Again, this frame appeared early and prominently in coverage of the National Adaptation plan. Its use in this period was frequently in the context of discussions of managed retreat, where the ‘tough choices’ referred to were often about ‘who pays.’¹⁷ After the January-February weather events, a very similar phrase - ‘tough calls’ - was used frequently by the Prime Minister to describe the government’s ongoing response to the events. In that context, it frames the government as willing and ready to take action, and to take responsibility for New Zealand’s ongoing wellbeing in difficult times. However, as a consequence of the Prime Minister’s repeated use of the phrase, it became a frequently-used frame in media coverage, reinforcing the associated framing that presents climate adaptation as a series of sacrifices.¹⁸ In this period, ‘tough calls’ were tied to decisions about vulnerable or flood-damaged communities, and later to the government’s commitment to ‘build back better.’ It was not tied to financial decisions as explicitly as it had been the year before, although this was often implied.

Local stories

This frame offers case studies and examples of what adaptation, or other effects of climate change, might look like.

It covered stories about local initiatives, events, and consultation processes. It featured, as a significant subset, stories that could be titled ‘**residents in distress.**’ A number of local stories appeared during the public consultation period on the National

¹³ “Insurance, Property Transfer and Who Pays”; “Blueprint for More Resilient Communities.”

¹⁴ “Auckland Floods”; Stock, “Owners of Flood-Prone Homes Will Pay More for Insurance.”

¹⁵ “Nick Stewart.”

¹⁶ “Thomas Coughlan.”

¹⁷ “Dealing with Climate Change”; “Blueprint for More Resilient Communities.”

¹⁸ “‘Tough Calls’ to Be Made on Future of Climate-Vulnerable Communities - Chris Hipkins”; Whyte, “Cyclone Gabrielle.”

Adaptation Plan, acting to illustrate the kinds of issues that the plan anticipated communities might need to grapple with, albeit without always naming the plan.¹⁹ Another significant group focused on Council-run consultation processes anticipated or already under way. Only two of these stories framed engagement with government or local government as a partnership.²⁰ The remainder framed engagement as absent or inadequate, and residents as excluded, fearful, frustrated, and ‘out-of-pocket’ as a consequence of government and local government actions, *prior* to any substantial regulatory or social impacts.²¹

In coverage of the floods and Cyclone, this frame was used to discuss and contextualise events as they occurred. One story offered a case study illustrating what Aucklanders might face, with some focus on Council’s responsibility to engage with communities.²² A number of stories repeated the ‘residents in distress’ framing, describing how residents felt government or local government had failed them in systemic, or in specific ways.²³ Some stories simply described residents’ traumatic experiences during the floods or Cyclone, with one motivated by a Council-run meeting at Muriwai.²⁴

Pulling together

This frame presented more positive stories about community members’ capacity to work together and support one another in times of trouble.

Sometimes, aspects of this framing appeared in ‘residents in distress’ stories, in a secondary capacity.²⁵ Stories framing communities as a source of support and inspiration began appearing in the aftermath of the floods and Cyclone, recounting actual community action.²⁶ In many of these stories, community members described their communities as exceptionally strong; in a couple of instances, the reporting framed New Zealanders as particularly resilient or community-minded.²⁷ At least one of these stories employed dual primary framings: the headline and body of the report used ‘pulling together’ in a story about community cohesion; at the same time, as it appeared in the ‘Top Stories’ section of the news site, the report was strongly framed as a ‘residents in distress’ and ‘community vs outsiders’ story.²⁸ Other stories offered

¹⁹ “Matatā”; Sharpe, “Seawall to Protect Homes Won’t Go Ahead This Year after Two of 18 Residents Refused to Fund It”; “Wellington. Scoop » South Coast Residents Face Challenge of Sea-Level Rise and Climate Change.”

²⁰ Jones, “Quarter of Nelson Households Forecast to Be Affected by Climate-Related Flooding”; “\$10 Million More for Flood-Wracked Buller.”

²¹ Sharpe, “‘Managed Retreat’ from Hawke’s Bay Coast Discussed behind Closed Doors”; “Paihia Waterfront Storm Project Meeting Should Be Public, Community Says”; “Coastal Residents Consider ‘selling up and Moving out’ amid Fear of Managed Retreat | Stuff.Co.Nz”; “Hastings Council’s New Building Rule Leaves Some ‘Frustrated’, out of Pocket.”

²² Kilgallon, “Little Shoal Bay’s (Very Wet) Future.”

²³ “Auckland Flooding,” February 8, 2023; Stock, “Owner Desperate for Auckland Council to Act as Her Red-Stickered Home Teeters on Brink of Landslip on Council Land”; Ham, “‘No One Came for Me’”; Spinoff, “You Need to Listen to This Heartwrenching Interview with a Tolaga Bay Farmer”; “Napier Residents Criticise ‘Total Disorganisation’ of Flood Response”; “Auckland Flooding,” February 2, 2023.

²⁴ Schulz, “‘Utterly Pancaked’”; “Dargaville Couple Cling to Fire Engine in Dramatic ‘life and Death’ Cyclone Gabrielle Rescue”; “Resident Questions Future of Houses in Auckland’s Slip-Hit Muriwai”; “‘Crying, Screaming.’”

²⁵ Spinoff, “You Need to Listen to This Heartwrenching Interview with a Tolaga Bay Farmer”; Schulz, “‘Utterly Pancaked’”; “Dargaville Couple Cling to Fire Engine in Dramatic ‘life and Death’ Cyclone Gabrielle Rescue.”

²⁶ “Cyclone Gabrielle,” February 16, 2023; “‘Ready to Boil Over’”; Sharpe, “Cyclone Gabrielle.”

²⁷ Maxwell, “We Can Rely on Each Other, and Our National Character, Even as Disasters Mount”; Thornber, “‘Thank You for Welcoming Us.’”

²⁸ “‘Ready to Boil Over.’”

advice for caring for yourself and others, or commentary about the power of collective action, more generally.²⁹

Several stories, all published in *Stuff's* 'Pou Tiaki' section, focused on Māori and Pasifika communities' collective response to planning for, or responding to the weather events through marae, iwi and hapū, and community organisations.³⁰ One story highlighted the cooperation between politicians from opposing parties in their work on climate change legislation.³¹

Communities vs outsiders

This framing began to appear prominently later in the period of analysis, pitting hard working and vulnerable communities against potential threats from outsiders.

There were echoes of this framing in early reports of community response to the floods in Auckland, either through reports of residents fearful of potential threats from outsiders, or in reports of residents fed up and feeling let down by local authorities.³² However, this framing assumed more prominence in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, as communities dealt with isolation and loss of services in addition to the other impacts of the event. It also became part of the political response to the event, as the government responded to community reports of threatening behaviour.³³

Solutions / What needs to change

This frame presented potential solutions to the problems associated with the water-related impacts of climate change, framing climate impact on a spectrum from something which could be 'fixed,' to something which could be mitigated.

One story from 2022 presented consultation as a mechanism for future planning and problem-solving,³⁴ while one discussed local regulation.³⁵ However, the vast majority of these stories appeared in the January-February coverage. Most presented technical solutions, rather than social ones. These included a number of discussions of urban planning that focused on the idea of the 'sponge city,' flood plains, and infrastructure.³⁶ Other stories presented purely engineered solutions, either from experts or from community members.³⁷ A few addressed individuals' or communities' support for managed retreat.³⁸

²⁹ Wills, "Even When Disasters Feel 'unprecedented', There Is Always a Way Through"; Maxwell, "We Can Rely on Each Other, and Our National Character, Even as Disasters Mount"; "Cyclone Gabrielle," February 22, 2023.

³⁰ Ruru, "Māori and Pasifika Communities Brace for Cyclone Gabrielle"; Jacobs, "Water Top Priority for Ngāti Porou Leadership after Water Plant Failure"; Tang, "Northland Marae Step up for Whānau Displaced by Cyclone Gabrielle."

³¹ "Shaw and Muller Revive Climate Change Partnership to Discuss Flood Retreat Bill."

³² "Resident Questions Future of Houses in Auckland's Slip-Hit Muriwai"; "Auckland Floods"; "Auckland Flooding," February 2, 2023.

³³ "Ready to Boil Over"; "Live"; Manch, "Cyclone Gabrielle"; "Cyclone Gabrielle," February 22, 2023.

³⁴ Jones, "Quarter of Nelson Households Forecast to Be Affected by Climate-Related Flooding."

³⁵ Niall, "Auckland's Climate Action Moment of Truth."

³⁶ "Making Cities More 'spongey' to Cope with Future Deluges"; Welch, "Auckland Floods"; "Analysis"; Macdonald, "We've Paved Paradise, How Do We Let the Water Out?"; "Can a Sponge City Really Prevent Flooding?"; Smith, "Floods Are Inevitable. Flood Disasters Are Not."

³⁷ "What Now for Auckland?"; "Auckland Floods."

³⁸ "Flood-Hit West Auckland Resident Calls for 'urgent' Managed Retreat"; "Cyclone Gabrielle," February 22, 2023.

Mistakes were made

This framing focused on what was done wrong, in terms of planning for climate change, specifically, urban planning, more generally, or in the immediate response to events.

Stories critical of individual local authorities or regulatory actions in coverage of the National Adaptation plan could fall under this heading, as could stories about the time lost to prepare for climate change.³⁹ However, most of the stories using this frame were concentrated in the days following the weather events of January-February, 2023. A significant number blamed 'inertia' on the part of both politicians and individual citizens for the scale of the current crisis, framing the experience as a consequence of inaction, and reminding readers of the limited time left to take action.⁴⁰ Others addressed what they saw as failings by specific politicians or in specific legislation,⁴¹ while a group of related stories focused on urban planning - particularly the location of new developments on flood plains.⁴² One story addressed media coverage as a source of confusion and misdirection during Cyclone Gabrielle.⁴³

The politics of climate change

This frame presents climate change itself, or climate change adaptation, as first and foremost a political issue.

The frame covers stories which blame politicians for failing to act either in time or in proportion to the threats posed by climate change.⁴⁴ More particularly, this frame includes stories asserting that 'climate change is real,' and that climate action requires political cooperation.⁴⁵ A notable variation on this frame emerged in reports of an idea advanced by the leader of the ACT Party, David Seymour, that we should 'move on' from mitigation in favour of adaptation, and that government responses to the weather events were a form of 'disaster politics.'⁴⁶ Comments of this kind frame climate adaptation not as a matter for science, but as a matter of politics. Note that our data gathering occurred before a National party MP, Maureen Pugh, made comments suggesting that the science of climate change was unsettled.

³⁹ "Hastings Council's New Building Rule Leaves Some 'Frustrated', out of Pocket"; "James Shaw Expresses 'lost Decades' on Climate Action, Sets out Blueprint for How Aotearoa Will Adapt."

⁴⁰ Vance, "Passively Waiting for Climate Change Has Cost Us Time, Options, and Lives"; Pagani, "Josie Pagani"; Hickey, "Will This Be the Climate Crisis Event That Finally Spurs Action?"; "Complete Abdication of Responsibility"; "We Need to Get Cracking' - As Seas Rise, Time for Planning Running Out."

⁴¹ Spinoff, "You Need to Listen to This Heartwrenching Interview with a Tolaga Bay Farmer"; "Seymour"; Wannan, "A Law Could Allow Flood-Hit Homeowners to Seek Safer Ground, If the Government Would Fund It."

⁴² Newton, "For Sale"; Macdonald, "We've Paved Paradise, How Do We Let the Water Out?"; Donnell, "The Truth about New Housing and the Auckland Floods."

⁴³ "Radio Hosts Fixate on Schools Closing as Gabrielle Closes In."

⁴⁴ Vance, "Passively Waiting for Climate Change Has Cost Us Time, Options, and Lives"; Pagani, "Josie Pagani"; "Complete Abdication of Responsibility."

⁴⁵ Manhire, "How Do We Know Climate Change Played a Role in the Auckland Floods?"; Whyte, "Greens' James Shaw Looks for Cross-Party Support for New Climate Change Rules"; "Shaw and Muller Revive Climate Change Partnership to Discuss Flood Retreat Bill"; Sowman-Lund, "We're Standing in It... This Is Climate Change."

⁴⁶ "ACT Criticises Cyclone Response, Parliament Hiatus."

Equity

This frame emphasises the inequitable impact of climate change, and of particular climate change events, on different communities.

Stories that were about the National Adaptation plan and used this frame tended to focus on managed retreat, or insurance costs, framing inequity as a hypothetical outcome for whole communities of property owners.⁴⁷ Others presented equity as a necessary focus of consultation processes, or - more frequently - as a casualty of bungled consultation.⁴⁸ This frame also appeared, to a different end, in stories about 'who pays?' which presented the costs of adaptation as an unfair burden on the general public.⁴⁹

Following the January-February event, stories about access to insurance or payouts for homeowners in particular areas appeared again.⁵⁰ Others extended the focus on inequity to include people other than property owners. For instance, the frame was used to highlight the inequitable effect of climate events on those who are un- or underinsured, those without good access to stable housing, and those in historically underprivileged communities.⁵¹ Other stories used equity as a frame for highlighting culturally-specific taonga or priorities (such as the maintenance of urupā, or the provision of manaakitanga) which emergency response and planning in its current form tends to overlook.⁵²

What are the narratives we found in public communications about climate change in the news media, and what mindsets and values do they surface?

'Unhelpful' mindsets, narratives, and values are those that are likely to discourage constructive community engagement with Council, while 'helpful' mindsets, narratives, and values are those that are likely to encourage engagement.

⁴⁷ "Dealing with Climate Change"; Stock, "Insurer IAG Calls for an End to Building Homes in Flood Zones"; "Insurance, Property Transfer and Who Pays"; "Insurance Costs Could Increase Massively as Climate Risk Rises - Modeller"; "Matatā."

⁴⁸ "Wellington.Scoop » South Coast Residents Face Challenge of Sea-Level Rise and Climate Change"; "Paihia Waterfront Storm Project Meeting Should Be Public, Community Says"; Sharpe, "'Managed Retreat' from Hawke's Bay Coast Discussed behind Closed Doors."

⁴⁹ "Climate Change Poll."

⁵⁰ Stock, "Owners of Flood-Prone Homes Will Pay More for Insurance"; "Cyclone Gabrielle," February 22, 2023.

⁵¹ Edwards, "After the Auckland Floods"; Donnell, "The Truth about New Housing and the Auckland Floods"; Newton, "For Sale"; "Complete Abdication of Responsibility."

⁵² Tang, "Northland Marae Step up for Whānau Displaced by Cyclone Gabrielle"; Jacobs, "Water Top Priority for Ngāti Porou Leadership after Water Plant Failure."

Unhelpful mindsets, narratives, and values

Unhelpful mindset	Unhelpful narratives we found that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives unhelpful? Which values do they surface?
<p>(Our) Government is useless (Fatalism)</p>	<p>Narratives that suggest people in our government are unable to act or make changes that make a big difference.</p> <p>This sounds like: “[i]f you leave it to central government you will get: A) a really bad solution and B) it will arrive five years after you have flooded.”⁵³</p> <p>Or: ‘The flooding has openly exposed the infection of political inertia simmering under the surface’⁵⁴</p> <p>Or: ‘We’re not just falling behind in infrastructure. We are falling behind in the politics of sorting it out... Elsewhere, governments are putting more emphasis on making things work, less on making things at the lowest cost’⁵⁵</p>	<p>These narratives feed into a sense of hopelessness and isolation. They feed feelings of mistrust in government without providing a credible alternative, and transfer the onus to act to individual citizens.</p> <p>People feel they can’t do anything to effect change because people in government won’t listen or will be prevented from acting in other ways.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with security and competition.</p>
<p>Council (or government) has failed us (Individualism)</p>	<p>Narratives that suggest that Council’s role is to ensure (or restore) order and normality, and that residents’ experience of traumatic events represents a failure to do so.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘Being a first world country this shouldn’t happen to us. This is New Zealand. We should have better drainage facilities and the response should be pretty quick. The council and government have failed us...We all want to do the right thing, and we just want it tidied up.’⁵⁶</p> <p>Or: ‘Napier residents are angry at how long it has taken to restore power, internet and cellphone reception...Some residents have described the state of affairs as “worse than Covid”, with even essential services unable to operate’⁵⁷</p> <p>Or: ‘The bottom line is that the rains were certainly intense, but many parts of Auckland were just fine. Other parts were not, and stormwater infrastructure made the difference. The difference was not only drain capacity, but maintenance. There’s no point in having drains that are filled with gravel.’⁵⁸</p> <p>Or: ‘Are you guys managing this problem – are you managing this risk to me and my livelihood and my kid’s inheritance, and all of that? What are you doing about protecting me and mine?’⁵⁹</p>	<p>Like the fatalistic narratives above, these narratives feed mistrust in, and uncertainty about government. They pit residents against Council in an antagonistic relationship.</p> <p>These narratives over-emphasise individuals’ abilities to control their environment and blame large, complex, systemic problems (like the impacts of climate change) on human or administrative failings. They offer ‘quick fixes’ and value the ‘return to normal’ over sustainable solutions.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with security, conformity, and power.</p>

Unhelpful mindset	Unhelpful narratives we found that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives unhelpful? Which values do they surface?
<p>Technology will save us (Individualism, 'Money will fix it')</p>	<p>Demands for investment in new pipes, sea walls, new tech, and so on, prioritising technical or engineered solutions above all others, or blame for the problem that falls entirely on infrastructural or technical issues.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘St Mary’s Bay residents are blaming the council for massive slips that left some homes hanging precariously They say blocked drains and a poorly designed stormwater system meant torrents of water poured between homes in the dress-circle suburb, undermining the cliff face.’⁶⁰</p> <p>Or: ‘What now for Auckland? Four ideas for a more climate resilient city’⁶¹</p> <p>Or: ‘Actions I hear calls from communities are: we can just do emissions, and you can just put in some kind of physically-engineered thing, then ... we can make the life we have now as we know it stay.’⁶²</p> <p>Or (opposing): ‘If you put in a sea-wall, you’ll have no high-tide beach, and that’s a fairly serious trade-off. The sorts of conversations which are probably important to have are: is that what we want – do we want an entire country where all of our beaches have ... big walls on them, or all of the ones that have houses there – is that what we want?’⁶³</p>	<p>These narratives postpone the inevitable and prevent people from taking considered action in a timely way as they wait for a technological ‘fix,’ potentially creating moral hazards.</p> <p>In turn, this directs people away from the community and collective decision-making that supports wellbeing and is critical to adaptation. Such narratives can also contribute to a sense of competition over scarce resources by framing solutions as a matter of financial investment.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with power, security, competition, and achievement.</p>

Unhelpful mindset	Unhelpful narratives we found that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives unhelpful? Which values do they surface?
<p>Money is the answer ('Money will fix it' / Individualism)</p>	<p>Narratives suggesting that people are mainly, or exclusively motivated by money. They are focused on 'who pays?' as a crisis and an impediment to action (in stories about buy-outs, insurance coverage, compensation, and so on), or propose that economic growth will be the solution to the problems posed by climate change.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>"People have bought out there recently and are talking about possibly losing everything with the proposed possible retreat," ... "There are people talking about selling immediately and moving to Australia, getting the hell out of it, because they don't see any future where they are."</u>⁶⁴</p> <p>Or: <u>'It [the sea wall]'s going to cost us plenty, but the cost of our properties will increase'</u> ⁶⁵</p> <p>Or: <u>'There's a solution to finding some funds for a rebuild: stop vanity projects and concentrate on providing essential aid to places like Hawke's Bay, Wairoa, and Gisborne. Places where, if the roads aren't functional, we're entirely cut off... We need to stop the dithering, re-categorise certain projects as nice-to-haves, and provide the necessities for productive areas like Hawke's Bay and Gisborne.'</u> ⁶⁶</p> <p>Or: <u>'Cyclone Gabrielle looks set to be one of Aotearoa's most financially damaging storms ever, if not the most damaging, and worse than our previous record, which was set at over \$1 billion less than three weeks ago. So surely these events might change some of the political thinking around climate change action, both for politicians and voters?'</u>⁶⁷</p>	<p>These narratives constrict our capacity to change as we cling to what has been, or was. They cause people to look for impossible financial 'solutions' to climate change, again potentially leading to moral hazards.</p> <p>Narratives such as these place money and financial growth as a good in and of itself, rather than focusing on the larger, social good we could work toward. Consequently, they tend to ignore or underplay the need for a communal response to climate change or the inequitable context in which climate change occurs.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with achievement, power, and competition.</p>

Unhelpful mindset	Unhelpful narratives we found that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives unhelpful? Which values do they surface?
<p>We need to take care of our own (Fatalism, individualism, Us-vs-Them)</p>	<p>Narratives that claim that the time for mitigation has passed, and our own survival requires focusing on adaptation; narratives that pit groups (like ‘environmentalists,’ ‘the government,’ or others) against one another; narratives that make us choose between adapting to climate change and other necessary, public good actions (for example, providing housing); narratives that capitalise on fear and uncertainty.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘Live: Looters, crime - Road workers threatened at gunpoint, Nash grilled over gang comments’⁶⁸</p> <p>Or: ‘[He] said the weather showed a need to shift focus regarding climate change. "Our climate change response needs to shift from mitigation to adaptation. New Zealand can't change the climate but it can better adapt, and unfortunately we're getting a really big lesson in that right now." He said risks should be accurately priced in insurance, and people who benefited or imposed costs should be the ones to pay, rather than costs being forced on them.’⁶⁹</p> <p>Or: ‘We must stop those who are determined to foist more and more housing on Auckland, well in excess of the Auckland Unitary Plan. Their plans are flawed. Auckland cannot cope now’⁷⁰</p> <p>Or: Climate change poll: Tolerance dropping for those who build in harm's way⁷¹</p> <p>Or (opposing): ‘The rich ... get protection ... the poor get managed retreat...[He] said based on overseas experience some communities would be winners and some losers. "Those richer communities and cities that are proactive will defend themselves and work out options. But the poorer, coastal, rural, potentially Māori communities could be left, wondering what the hell to do.”⁷²</p>	<p>These narratives pit people against one another at the level of nation, community, or even household. Like other unhelpful narratives, they place the responsibility to act on individuals or small groups, rather than on communities working together, and in addition push people toward insecurity and competition. They force trade-offs between things which are equally necessary, forcing people to make impossible choices.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with competition and security.</p>

Unhelpful mindset	Unhelpful narratives we found that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives unhelpful? Which values do they surface?
<p>Climate change is a political issue (Us-vs-Them, Fatalism)</p>	<p>Narratives that shift attention away from the science of climate change, and its communal impacts, by asserting that it, or our response to it, is a political issue and thus, to a certain extent, a matter of political preference.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘After Auckland’s floods and with Cyclone Gabrielle wreaking further damage, it’s time to talk about the Labour-National housing intensification deal.’⁷³</p> <p>Or: ‘Nearly six years ago, Jacinda Ardern declared called climate change “my generation’s nuclear-free moment”. But her government became preoccupied with stopping the missiles, but neglected to build the bunkers.’⁷⁴</p> <p>Or: ‘I think a lot of people ... in the farming community will say the idea “if only the government made them sacrifice a few calves we’d be delivered from the storm” - I don’t think that helps right now. I thought that needs to be said.’⁷⁵</p>	<p>These narratives reposition climate change adaptation as a question of party politics, pushing people toward polarised positions and making collective, sustained action more difficult to achieve. They can also surface a mistrust in government to ‘get the job done,’ causing people to lose hope.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with competition and power.</p>
<p>Time is running out / has run out (Fatalism)</p>	<p>We’re at a crisis point, we need to act immediately. Life as we know it is over. Climate change is an exceptional problem - we have no capacity to manage it. This may also include narratives which use static language about time, causing people to struggle to make sense of what it is they are experiencing, and what they should expect.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘Passively waiting for climate change has cost us time, options, and lives.’⁷⁶</p> <p>Or: ‘the “lost decades” of action on climate change in Aotearoa...Together the only way forward is to make up for lost time.’⁷⁷</p> <p>Or: ‘Like his neighbours, he’d been told that the 2021 flood had been a one in 100 year flood. “And this one was one in 200,” he said. “So does that mean next year we’re going to have a one in 300? Does it just go on and on? We’ve been here 28 years and 26 of those years have been absolutely fine.”’⁷⁸</p> <p>Or (opposing): ‘Society is constantly full of problems and tensions, and losers and winners, and all the rest of it. This is never-ending. This unique story, to me, is ... not, to me, capturing the truth of the human condition and of working together – this ‘unique’ thing that everybody talks about.’⁷⁹</p>	<p>These narratives can lead to scarcity narratives (us vs them) and polarisation. Even if well-meaning, they may contribute to feelings of hopelessness and remove the motivation to act.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with power and security.</p>

A note on 'Us-vs-Them' narratives

In our analysis, we encountered a significant number of binaries that frame the effects of climate change and actions to support climate change adaptation through antagonistic narratives. These are: mitigation vs adaptation, housing vs climate action, communities vs outsiders, and council (or government) vs residents. These binaries feature in different ways in the other dominant narratives and frames that we encountered, and are noted where appropriate in the table and analysis above

These can all be classified as 'us-vs-them' narratives, or narratives that encourage people to feel that they are in competition in a zero-sum game. 'Us-vs-them' narratives assert that more for someone else means less for me. Not all of the binaries we encountered are specifically about human actors or actions; some are about resources, or abstracted priorities. However, competition over resources and priorities inevitably involves competition between people. The effect of these narratives is to increase polarisation and feelings of hopelessness and lack of efficacy.

⁵³ "Wellington.Scoop » South Coast Residents Face Challenge of Sea-Level Rise and Climate Change."

⁵⁴ "Complete Abdication of Responsibility."

⁵⁵ Pagani, "Josie Pagani."

⁵⁶ "Auckland Flooding," February 2, 2023.

⁵⁷ "Napier Residents Criticise 'Total Disorganisation' of Flood Response."

⁵⁸ "Seymour."

⁵⁹ Shephard and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Kataraina Maki, Lauren Simpson, Toby Shephard.

⁶⁰ "Auckland Floods."

⁶¹ "What Now for Auckland?"

⁶² Maki and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Kataraina Maki, Lauren Simpson, Toby Shephard.

⁶³ Blackett and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Paula Blackett.

⁶⁴ "Coastal Residents Consider 'selling up and Moving out' amid Fear of Managed Retreat | Stuff.Co.Nz."

⁶⁵ Sharpe, "Seawall to Protect Homes Won't Go Ahead This Year after Two of 18 Residents Refused to Fund It."

⁶⁶ "Nick Stewart."

⁶⁷ Hickey, "Will This Be the Climate Crisis Event That Finally Spurs Action?"

⁶⁸ "ACT Criticises Cyclone Response, Parliament Hiatus."

⁶⁹ "Live."

⁷⁰ Donnell, "The Truth about New Housing and the Auckland Floods."

⁷¹ "Climate Change Poll."

⁷² "We Need to Get Cracking' - As Seas Rise, Time for Planning Running Out."

⁷³ "Seymour."

⁷⁴ Vance, "Passively Waiting for Climate Change Has Cost Us Time, Options, and Lives."

⁷⁵ "ACT Criticises Cyclone Response, Parliament Hiatus."

⁷⁶ Vance, "Passively Waiting for Climate Change Has Cost Us Time, Options, and Lives."

⁷⁷ "James Shaw Expresses 'lost Decades' on Climate Action, Sets out Blueprint for How Aotearoa Will Adapt."

⁷⁶ "Auckland Flooding," February 8, 2023.

⁷⁹ Harré and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Nikki Harré.

Helpful mindsets, narratives, and values

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Climate change is real, and this event has reminded us of that</p>	<p>Narratives that acknowledge the reality of climate change and the relationship between climate change and peoples’ recent experiences. As a counter to fatalistic narratives that emphasise our lack of action to date, they may also acknowledge the difficulties we have ‘seeing’ climate change until it is upon us.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘If the reality of the climate crisis hadn’t sunk in for you until this summer, you’re probably not alone. Humans simply aren’t wired to assess future threats - particularly ones they can’t see, like a warming planet.’⁸⁰</p>	<p>These narratives can help put events in perspective, and encourage long-term thinking and planning. They move people away from thinking of an event as ‘just the weather,’ or a consequence of failing infrastructure, and can remind us of evidence-based solutions. Note that it is very important that such narratives present clear, empathetic advice about the impacts of climate change, rather than alarmist descriptions of trauma, or panic about time running out, or ‘explainers’ written in very complex, technical language .</p> <p>These narratives can surface values to do with wisdom and responsibility.</p>
<p>Responsible management / Planning for the big things (Public good)</p>	<p>Narratives that encourage us to take responsible steps to plan for the future impacts of climate change with concrete examples of outcomes to work towards.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘What could a more resilient Aotearoa New Zealand look like? Let’s imagine... When decision-makers adopt solutions that are based on research, we get closer to our goal.’⁸¹</p> <p>Or: ‘It can be really helpful to try and...flip the approach around so that you’re working actively with the thing that you want to land, rather than trying to mitigate the thing that you’re concerned about. So, it’s a much more emphatic and positive approach’⁸²</p>	<p>These narratives help us feel that change is not only necessary, but possible - something which is particularly important in climate communications.⁸³ They reframe responsible management away from individual asset protection, and toward community actions and support. They also help move us out of a reactive ‘fight-flight-freeze’ state, and into a proactive state of mind.</p> <p>These narratives mobilise values to do with necessity and pragmatism, as well as intergenerational responsibility.</p>

⁸⁰ Johnston, “Does Cyclone Gabrielle Have You Thinking about Climate Change?”

⁸¹ Smith, “Floods Are Inevitable. Flood Disasters Are Not.”

⁸² Yates, and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Amanda Yates.

⁸³ Creative, “Engaging the Public on Climate Risks and Adaptation.”

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>We know what to do (Better together)</p>	<p>Narratives that remind people of the strengths and skills we already hold, particularly in communities.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>‘Even when disasters feel “unprecedented,” there is always a way through... you don’t need to work it all out from scratch. We know how to recover from disasters.’⁸⁴</u></p> <p>Or: <u>‘I can’t do much from where I am, except send my thoughts, and my trust in our astonishing natural capacity as a nation to look after each other, love each other and cling to our motto: She’ll be right. For some of us, things might never be the same again. For the rest, she will be right, I hope.’⁸⁵</u></p> <p>Or: ‘There is a lot actually happening around food systems, at a community level...I don’t know if the community would put an adaptation label on what they’re doing, but it is essentially adaptation’⁸⁶</p>	<p>These narratives are helpful because they remind us that we are not alone, and that we have the capacity to make things better when we work together. They assert that we can bring our skills and our capacity to care for one another to even the most complex problems.</p> <p>Research shows that community is important to those who are concerned about climate change, and people are more likely to feel they can take action when community is emphasised.⁸⁷</p> <p>Narratives like this particularly emphasise the values of human connection, support, and care.</p>

⁸⁴ Wills, “Even When Disasters Feel ‘unprecedented’, There Is Always a Way Through.”

⁸⁵ Maxwell, “We Can Rely on Each Other, and Our National Character, Even as Disasters Mount.”

⁸⁶ Simpson and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Kataraina Maki, Lauren Simpson, Toby Shephard.

⁸⁷ “Entering Climate Change Communications Through the Side Door.”

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>There's strength together (Systems narrative, Better together)</p>	<p>Narratives that discourage us from acting in silos by encouraging us to work together, and reminding us that there's not one solution to the impacts of climate change, but many. These narratives assert that there's strength in numbers of all kinds. They might focus on productive ways that central or local government can work with communities to achieve results.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>'In the prevention of flooding, it's not one solution that's going to give you all the answers. You've got to do a little bit of everything and it will collectively make things a little bit more resilient'</u> ⁸⁸</p> <p>Or: <u>'This is something that we have to deal with as a country'</u> ⁸⁹</p> <p>Or: <u>'When disaster strikes it's a collective event. Decisions involve many different people with different needs, different viewpoints and different ideas. ...Life after disaster pushes us deeper into contact with the collective – a collective experience where everyone suddenly has something in common, where neighbours help each other, and communities debate their future.'</u> ⁹⁰</p> <p>Or: '[A] community isn't just a single mindset; it's multiple mindsets and multiple views on things, depending on your worldview, and your culture and your situation. So, that ...approach of communities themselves as being the owners of the issue gets you that wider perspective, and that acceptance of that wider perspective, and therefore the drive and the buy-in to change behaviour, and to actually look into different options' ⁹¹</p> <p>Or: '...it's always about the hero politician – the hero leader who's going to come to the rescue and save the day ...by providing resources here and there, but a rangatira, from a te ao Māori perspective, is around someone who's able to listen, first and foremost, be aware and empathetic to the needs of community, and then work with them, in order to try and figure out how everyone can best achieve wellbeing. ..., I think that type of leadership is required more than the so-called hero coming to the rescue. That's not empowering. A rangatira is able to empower communities to be able to do things for themselves. They're really mana-enhancing, rather than mana-munching; a mana-enhancing type of approach.' ⁹²</p>	<p>These narratives encourage people to feel they have options and support in the face of overwhelming events. They lift our gaze away from quick fixes or apparently simple solutions to complex problems, in favour of collaborative, flexible, workable plans of action. They also help counter the 'us-vs-them' narratives that tell us we're on our own.</p> <p>These narratives mobilise values to do with pragmatism, responsibility, and collectivity.</p>

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Our communities are strong (Better together)</p>	<p>Narratives that emphasise community as a source of support and strength. These differ from the narratives above by focusing on the inherent good people experience in coming together as a community, rather than on the outcome of that process.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>'It was nice to see people helping each other, he said. "That's what I like about this situation, is like, the way it brings everybody together. It's really beautiful to see a community come together like this, support each other." [He] said there was no plan yet to return home, and he was taking it day by day.'</u>⁹³</p> <p>Or: <u>'That community spirit has been put to the test, and it's what's helping them, and everyone else who calls the suburb home, get through this tragic time. "People have really stepped up," she says.'</u>⁹⁴</p> <p>Or: <u>'[He] spent just a single night at the evacuation centre before heading out to help the community again on Wednesday. He and his wife were able to return to their home to sleep last night and have begun the long process of cleaning up. He was overwhelmed with the kindness shown to him during the family's early morning rescue and beyond. "I got to see the good in people in a time of distress. That's the message I have taken from this,"'</u>⁹⁵</p> <p>Or: 'Collaborative planning processes can be extraordinarily empowering.'⁹⁶</p>	<p>These narratives emphasise community as a source of support and comfort. As for the 'we know what to do' narrative, this can help people feel more able to take action on climate issues. Moreover, they emphasise reciprocity and mutual care, which are important counters to the 'fight-flight-freeze' responses provoked by feelings of isolation.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with reciprocal care, collectivity, and love.</p>

⁸⁸ Macdonald, "We've Paved Paradise, How Do We Let the Water Out?"

⁸⁹ Whyte, "Greens' James Shaw Looks for Cross-Party Support for New Climate Change Rules."

⁹⁰ Wills, "Even When Disasters Feel 'unprecedented', There Is Always a Way Through."

⁹¹ Tait and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Andrew Tait.

⁹² Awatere, Green, and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Shaun Awatere.

⁹³ "Cyclone Gabrielle," February 16, 2023.

⁹⁴ Schulz, "Utterly Pancaked."

⁹⁵ "Dargaville Couple Cling to Fire Engine in Dramatic 'life and Death' Cyclone Gabrielle Rescue."

⁹⁶ Blackett and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Paula Blackett.

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Government protects, or acts for the common good (Public good, Better together)</p>	<p>Narratives that show government acting in good faith, for the public good. Such narratives mitigate a lack of confidence in government by framing government as a solution to problems, rather than a problem itself, and a partner to the community, rather than an antagonist. These narratives emphasise government’s mission and values shaped by acting in the public good, as opposed to its specific actions, encouraging public engagement.⁹⁷ This may also include narratives which demand government action in the public good.</p> <p>This sounds like: ‘James Renwick, the climate scientist, says the best thing we can do as individuals is hold the government to account.’⁹⁸</p> <p>Or: ‘Since our event [Cyclone Hale] ... happened here a month ago, we haven’t had one person from the Labour Party or the National Party or the local government, or Fed Farmers or Beef and Lamb. All these people, rural support, we’ve had the most lovely cake dropped off, which we appreciate very much, but in the month since the last event we’re all struggling to find out why these logs are continuing to be allowed in these forestry estates and strewn over our beautiful properties. It’s just beyond us. No one has come up our drive from the last month from any of these outfits to sit down and discuss what the hell is going to happen and how the hell they’re going to help us get through this mess.’⁹⁹</p>	<p>These narratives shift people’s focus away from blaming government for their problems, and toward seeing government as a partner in finding solutions to complex social and environmental issues.</p> <p>Research overseas has shown that there is a wider degree of faith in government action on public health and environmental issues than in other spheres.¹⁰⁰ People interested in taking action on climate change already see government as key to the necessary changes.¹⁰¹ Narratives that present government in terms of its public good mission and values help activate these framings.</p> <p>These narratives surface values to do with responsibility and collectivity.</p>

⁹⁷ Bostrom, “Priming More Productive Views of Government: Survey Experiment Results.”

⁹⁸ Johnston, “Does Cyclone Gabrielle Have You Thinking about Climate Change?”

⁹⁹ Spinoff, “You Need to Listen to This Heartwrenching Interview with a Tolaga Bay Farmer.”

¹⁰⁰ Bostrom, “Priming More Productive Views of Government: Survey Experiment Results.”

¹⁰¹ Latter, “Climate Change Communication and Engagement With Older People in England.”

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Climate actions have to serve everyone (Equity, Public good)</p>	<p>Narratives that remind us that the effects of climate change are experienced unevenly because of already-existing social inequity. These narratives assert that any climate actions have to have the interests of the entire community at heart, and to take account of equity as a key principle.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>‘...the communities in these lower-income areas band together because of necessity because they don’t expect anyone else to come to help them. “You should listen to the conversations at the evacuation centre out south. They’re just like: ‘What agencies? What Government? What Civil Defence?’ They just say: ‘Look at what we do on our own.’”</u>¹⁰²</p> <p>Or: <u>“We were just happy with what we got offered, and I think that’s a very common mentality with us low-income families. We don’t question these things. We don’t question where it’s built.”</u>¹⁰³</p> <p>Or: <u>‘About 850 locals...submitted, the majority opting for what council calls ‘hold the line’ actions, to save existing amenities. The issue is whether they can make such investment on the entire coastline and whether other areas will want in on it, too. “Council can’t afford too much ‘hold the line’ - if they say they’ll hold the line here, Mission Bay will want that too, and it’s not feasible in the long term to do it everywhere”</u>¹⁰⁴</p> <p>Or: ‘Most rangatahi don’t have the – they don’t feel invited or welcomed into those spaces... if you walk into a Council building, it is quite – it can be quite an impressive force. You know it’s a power structure. You know that there’s people who are sitting often around almost a round table, or set in these positions of power, and you must sit to the side’¹⁰⁵</p>	<p>These narratives place climate action in the context of a wider public good, and guard against the moral hazards and inequity that can be a result of purely local decision-making. They help encourage a whole-community view, rather than an us-vs-them response. They prioritise public good over individual assets, and remind us that ‘louder voices’ may dominate public engagement if care is not taken with the process.</p> <p>These narratives mobilise values to do with equity, justice, and collectivity.</p>

¹⁰² “Complete Abdication of Responsibility’.”

¹⁰³ Newton, “For Sale.”

¹⁰⁴ Kilgallon, “Little Shoal Bay’s (Very Wet) Future.”

¹⁰⁵ Irvine and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Amy Irvine.

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Putting energy into the common good (Equity, Systems narrative)</p>	<p>Narratives that place climate action in the context of larger efforts toward social and cultural wellbeing: toward a more just and equitable society, overall. These resemble the narratives above, but offer more concrete solutions and emphasise strength in diversity.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>'We have to activate the Pasifika superpowers of strong social connection and community leadership with programmes that get past frames of survival to intentionally growing collective, intergenerational wealth and wellbeing... Pasifika will lead their own futures if we rid them of the long tail of Pasifika inequity.'</u>¹⁰⁶</p> <p>Or: <u>"Often times, when you do a risk assessment of flood-prone areas it's mostly in terms of the risk to lives, livelihoods and infrastructure and, often, culturally important sites get missed off." Awatere said having greater involvement of Māori in the process of determining risk areas leads to a more nuanced, locally based approach to addressing the issues around relocation.</u>¹⁰⁷</p> <p>Or: '...how do we build communities that are able to adapt and respond and think ahead, and have enough – I almost want to say enough sass in them, or some analogy like that, whereby we are putting energy into the common good all the time?'¹⁰⁸</p>	<p>These narratives encourage people to feel they have options and support in the face of overwhelming events. They lift our gaze away from quick fixes or apparently simple solutions to complex problems, in favour of collaborative, flexible, workable plans of action. They also help counter the 'us-vs-them' narratives that tell us we're on our own.</p> <p>These narratives mobilise values to do with pragmatism, responsibility, and collectivity.</p>

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, "After the Auckland Floods."

¹⁰⁷ Jacobs, "Water Top Priority for Ngāti Porou Leadership after Water Plant Failure."

¹⁰⁸ Harré and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Nikki Harré.

Helpful mindset	Helpful narratives that reflect this mindset	Why are these narratives helpful?
<p>Let nature do what it was meant to do (Systems narratives)</p>	<p>Narratives that emphasise holistic, nature-driven responses to climate change.</p> <p>This sounds like: <u>‘The redevelopment is part of a global urban design movement to make our concrete jungles behave more like natural ones – creating green spaces to filter, drain and hold water that would otherwise surge over endless pavement, overwhelming stormwater networks.’</u>¹⁰⁹</p> <p><u>As Sara Zwart, Eke Panuku Development Auckland principal regenerative design lead, puts it, “it’s about “working with natural systems, not against them”</u>¹¹⁰</p> <p>Or: <u>‘Some West Auckland residents whose properties have repeatedly flooded say their homes should not be repaired or rebuilt, and the land returned to nature.’</u>¹¹¹</p> <p>Or: ‘I love wetlands, and I love them because the structure of wetlands, and in how that grouping of organisms together – they’re accustomed to dealing with flooding events – and for our salt-marsh, and sea-edge, coastal wetlands; they’re accustomed to saltwater incursions, and maybe transforming through time, and so they build a resiliency into that system...wetlands deliver both on adaptation and mitigation.’¹¹²</p>	<p>These narratives encourage long-term, holistic thinking. They remove the pressure to focus on a false dichotomy between adaptation or mitigation actions - which are, in fact, mutually supportive - by focusing instead on nature.¹¹³ They also offer solutions which can seem more accessible, financially and socially, than ‘hard engineered’ solutions, and which are likely to be more equitable in their effects.</p> <p>These narratives draw on values to do with care for nature, love, and pragmatism.</p>

¹⁰⁹ Macdonald, “We’ve Paved Paradise, How Do We Let the Water Out?”

¹¹⁰ Macdonald

¹¹¹ “Flood-Hit West Auckland Resident Calls for ‘urgent’ Managed Retreat.”

¹¹² Hikuroa and Hillyer, Interview for Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water, Phase 1. Daniel Hikuroa.

¹¹³ Creative, “Engaging the Public on Climate Risks and Adaptation.”

Putting this review in the context of the wider “Too Much Water” project

This analysis of public communications is one of a series of pieces of research used to develop initial advice on how to talk about too much water. All written reports from this work are available on [our website](#).

This report sits alongside the following research.

In phase one:

- A review of the framing literature on climate-change adaptation. We conducted this research in August-September, 2022, and summarised it in the report *Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water: Framing literature review* (February, 2022).
- Semi-structured interviews with a variety of experts in climate-change adaptation. We conducted these interviews between September and October, 2022 and presented our findings to Council in November, 2022 and again in February, 2023. Quotes from these interviews supplement the analysis in this report.

The purpose of this first phase of work was supporting Council to get clear about what they need people to understand and how they need them to act in order to encourage public engagement.

In phase two, which is focused on understanding how members of the public in Tāmaki Makaurau currently talk, reason, and think about climate-change adaptation, and what informs this thinking:

An analysis of dominant frames, values, and narratives found in the media on the topic of climate-change adaptation in Tāmaki Makaurau and elsewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand, presented in this report.

Engagement with Aucklanders to identify how they currently think about water-related impacts of climate change, further review of cultural mindsets and narratives about the water-related impacts of climate change, and further analysis of expert advice to identify communication approaches that are likely to be helpful or unhelpful for communicators.

This phase of research will conclude with a presentation to Council about the mindsets and narratives to avoid when engaging with the public, and ideas for new narratives to test for deepening understanding and building support for the goals of Auckland’s Te Ara Urutau: Waikino / Too Much Water project.

Best practice would then involve testing the impact of these communication approaches on the outcomes of interest via a variety of techniques, such as focus groups or experiments. This would be followed by an implementation strategy for the most impactful and effective approaches.

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