

In response to the recent negative press, particularly from the media outside of the Pacific islands, regarding the vulnerability of our islands to climate change and sea-level rise, the Director of the SOPAC Secretariat, Dr. Russell Howorth, convened a press conference to correct this misconception.

Specifically, these media (and others) have made reference to a recently published article in an international scientific journal co-authored by a senior staff member of the SOPAC Secretariat. Copies of the brief prepared by the senior staff member by way of a response were circulated. The response emphasises that the article addresses the ongoing change in shape, size, and position on the reef platform of 27 low-lying coral islands on four atolls over the past 19-61 years based upon studies of historic air photographs and recent high-resolution satellite imagery. In no way does it make sweeping conclusions that the vulnerability of our islands is reducing particularly with regard to predictions about future impacts of sea-level change.

As the Director of SOPAC, it was imperative that a response was provided by him, as the reaction to the negative press implicitly if not explicitly serves to undermine the very credibility of regional organisations like SOPAC whose goal is to provide sound scientific and technical advice to their principal stakeholders, the island members.

Read Full Press Statement

Island Vulnerability Brief - Russel Howorth

Publication Brief - Arthur Webb