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# Understanding rural landholders' responses to climate change

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### SUMMARY

Global climate modelling has identified south-eastern Australia as a 'hotspot' for more frequent climatic extremes. Rural landholders may be vulnerable to the risks this presents if they are not considering climate change in management decisions. Australia's rural landholders have long been accustomed to responding to climatic variability. However, some of these adaptations may lead to downstream impacts. It is therefore important to understand what landholders are doing and the extent to which climate change is influencing their decisions. This chapter draws on a case study in two Victorian districts to address these knowledge gaps. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and a mail survey based on established socio-psychological scales to measure beliefs, values and attitudes that are expected to shape landholder behaviour.

Most interviewees had observed changes in climatic patterns but expressed a level of scepticism, often expressing concern over the extent of disagreement among scientists and the extent of vested interests by those presenting information. Most rural landholders surveyed were not climate change 'deniers', with 70% agreeing with the statement, 'The climate is changing and that human activity is a major influence'. Landholders were adopting a wide range of tactical and strategic responses to drought and climate change, which is consistent with rainfall as a critical factor in agricultural production. More than half the survey respondents said they