

I am a Geographer ...



Dr Werner Hennecke

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I started studying Geography at the Christian-Albrecht University, Kiel, Germany as an undergraduate student, majoring in physical / coastal Geography. Other subjects I took were physical oceanography, coastal geology and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). After finishing my undergraduate degree in Germany, I received a scholarship from the German and Australian Governments to study the impacts of coastal climate change at The University of Sydney (Coastal Studies Unit, School of Geography). After finishing my PhD in 1999 I worked as a GIS Lecturer in Sydney and Tasmania before moving to Melbourne in 2006. Here in Melbourne I worked in both state government and consulting.

Having worked at universities, in state government and the private sector, I have been lucky enough to have been exposed to a range of tasks and projects. At present I work in an office of about 250 staff with backgrounds ranging from physical oceanography, (coastal) engineering, to flood mapping, traffic and environmental planning and many others. The combination of my physical (coastal) and GIS backgrounds allows me to work on a broad range of projects that involve aspects of coastal climate change and beach renourishment projects to a wide range of GIS and GPS-based projects concerned with data analysis.

There are a number of geographers in my current workplace who work in flood mapping and analysis, as well as various other environmental, sustainability and climate change adaptation topics. I am also an Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne where I work with a fellow physical geographer, undertaking coastal research.

I loved Geography at school and also loved the ocean. As early as Year 10 I knew that I wanted to work on coastal issues. At that point, I read a book about waves, currents and all other things coastal, written by a Professor of Geography from the University of Munich. I was particularly interested in large (tsunami) waves.

When I started out studying Geography in the late 1980s, we were told "there are no jobs for geographers". However, it was only two or three years later that GIS technology created a vast number of jobs for environmental scientists and geographers. Given the broad range of topics a geographer can study and the range of environmental issues we are facing, I believe there are many job opportunities for geographers. However, many people and employers only have a vague understanding of what exactly Geography is up to us geographers to sell our skills and promote our area of study so that geography is and what geographers do is better understood.

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