



# Is your business ready to adapt to climate change?

By David McEwen

**A** 10cm increase in sea levels is all it takes to treble the risk of major coastal flooding, exposing coastal assets and infrastructure. As warming increases and rainfall patterns

change, millions of hectares of fertile cropland are at risk from heat, drought or flooding.

Overwhelming evidence shows that the climate is changing and

warming at an unprecedented rate. The way we consume non-renewable products and services such as petrol from fossil fuels, and our addiction to materials such as concrete is contributing to



creating a climate that will, within only a few decades, significantly impact the way we live.

On whatever scale it happens there is no doubt that the changing climate will have a deep impact to business: how we work and what we can make. Making your business adaptable and knowing how to adapt in the face of a changing climate is the focus of a new book aimed at helping businesses plan ahead to capture and preserve value.

It took over 25 years and changes to refrigeration, spray can and other systems to start decreasing the size of the hole in the ozone layer after the Montreal Protocol was signed. Tackling climate change is a much more daunting challenge, affecting a vast range of products, services and touching almost every company.

So what can businesses do? Some of the impacts being predicted by scientists include disruption to global food and water supplies, collapse of ecosystems, a range of new health challenges, displacement of populations and massive urban infrastructure challenges. Miami Beach just spent \$400 million raising and installing storm water pumps to protect the iconic but low-lying Alton Road.

Increased public awareness about the true cost of a high consumption lifestyle will drive a backlash. Industries that continue to produce products and services that consume and don't contribute to our environment will probably need to change voluntarily or have change imposed on them by government action such as limiting licenses to operate, or imposing higher operating costs.

But what needs to change and how does a business innovate? The knowledge of knowing what is coming allows us to adapt and change before it's too late.



**David McEwen** is a Director at strategic consultancy Adaptive Capability and author of *Navigating the Adaptive Economy: Managing Business Risk and Opportunity in a Changing Climate*. Find out more at [www.adaptivecapability.com](http://www.adaptivecapability.com)