

# NBKR In Depth

## Who's afraid of sea-level rise?

Sea-level rise is an interna-  
 tional issue that has been  
 politicised in the question of whether  
 there is evidence of a  
 marked acceleration in the rate  
 of sea-level rise in recent  
 decades. It is tempting for  
 some readers to assume  
 that the marked acceleration  
 in sea-level rise by contrast  
 with the average of 1.7mm  
 per year for more recent peri-

Yet, until there is unequivocal evidence of accel-  
 eration, the IPCC does not pretend that  
 its projections are predictions. It recognises that  
 climate change scientists have no expertise per se  
 in assessing how the distant future might unfold in  
 respect of human emissions of greenhouse gases.  
 Human inventiveness and behaviour in the form  
 of mitigation are not readily explicable using the  
 known laws of physics.  
 Yet, in New Zealand, the Ministry for the Envi-

much more modest projections assume a material

**MAHUTARI**  
 Bryce Wilkinson



that the global sea level could plausibly rise by five  
 metres this century, if so, a submerged Maui hatter  
 might become a modern-day Atlantis, a mecca for  
 divers.

The UN International Protocol on Climate  
 Change (IPCC) is widely depicted to be the authori-  
 tative voice of climate change scientists on sea-  
 level rise and related matters.

Scaremongering about sea-level  
 rise is a common feature of  
 the global warming debate.  
 Perhaps unsurprisingly, a  
 summary does not address the  
 fact that there is statistically significant  
 marked acceleration in the rate  
 of the observed historical record.  
 Instead, it seductively invites  
 a statistically significant accel-  
 eration in the long historical annual  
 averages with higher annual averages