

# Stochastic Finite-fault Ground Motion Simulation of the 2021 $M_w$ 5.9 Woods Point Earthquake: Methodology and Preliminary Results

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## Abstract

To better understand the physics of the 2021  $M_w$  5.9 Woods Point earthquake that occurred in Victoria state, Australia, we apply a stochastic finite-fault approach to simulate ground motions for 36 selected sites. We determine the input parameter values for regional geometric spreading and anelastic attenuation, path duration, site amplification, and Kappa value, from regression analysis of the observed Fourier Amplitude Spectra (FAS). We then determine the dynamic stress drop value by minimizing the residuals between the simulated and observed 5%-damped pseudo-spectral acceleration (PSA). We investigate the capability of the proposed stochastic model by comparing the simulated ground motions with the observations. Finally, we compare the simulated 5%-damped PSA with six GMMs selected for the NSHA (National Seismic Hazard Assessment) program, revealing that our simulations are within the acceptance range defined by the GMMs.

**Keywords:** Woods Point earthquake; stochastic simulation; attenuation model; GMSS2.0.

## 1 Introduction

Ground motion simulation is an important approach to generating synthetic time series of earthquake shaking for scientific and engineering purposes, such as facilitating regional seismic hazard analysis (Boore, 1983; Atkinson and Boore, 1995, 2006; Edwards and Fäh, 2013). According to Douglas (2022), over 600 ground motion models (GMMs), an important tool for ground motion characterisation in probabilistic seismic hazard analysis (PSHA), have been developed during the past 50 years (1970-2020) internationally, and ~90 of the GMMs are developed by simulation-based approaches. Stochastic simulation plays a particularly significant role in estimating ground shaking levels (especially for high-frequency ground motions) for low-to-moderate seismicity regions where strong ground motion observations are often scarce (Lam et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2020). For regions with abundant observational data, stochastic simulations are widely used in hybrid ground motion calculation to estimate high-frequency shaking (Pezeshk et al., 2018; Jayalakshmi et al., 2021).

By combining band-limit Gaussian white noise with a deterministic seismological model, Boore (1983; 2003) proposed an approach to generate synthetic accelerograms in which the seismological model is used as a filter in the Fourier domain defining the amplitude spectrum

that is composed of source, path, and site components. Based on the source model, two categories of stochastic ground motion simulation can be defined, the point-source model (Brune, 1970; Boore, 2003) and the finite-fault source model (Beresnev and Atkinson, 1998a, b; Motazedian and Atkinson, 2005). These two general approaches are encoded in two widely used software packages, SMSIM and EXSIM, respectively (Boore, 2003; Motazedian and Atkinson, 2005). Compared to SMSIM (point source), EXSIM (finite-fault source) is advantageous in considering the geometric properties and directivity effects of earthquake source in the simulation process, thus allowing to estimate ground motion amplitudes for large earthquakes at close distances from the causative fault, with a higher level of accuracy (Atkinson and Assatourians, 2015).

In this study, we use the recently developed GMSS (Ground Motion Simulation System) codes. Both GMSS1.0 (1D point source) and GMSS2.0 (2D finite-fault source) have been verified and validated against SMSIM and EXSIM, real earthquake observations, as well as GMMs (Tang et al. 2021; Tang 2022a, b).

As the largest earthquake that occurred in Victoria's recorded history, the 2021  $M_w$ 5.9 earthquake has drawn the attention of seismologists, engineers, and other communities (e.g., Houlst et al., 2021; Sinadinovski et al., 2021; Love, 2021). Even though the relatively large amount of well-recorded data allows us to investigate ground motion properties in detail, simulation-based data that encode earthquake physics with well-calibrated parameters are needed to facilitate local seismic hazard/ risk analysis. Therefore, we simulate ground motions for this event (using the GMSS2.0 code) to analyse regional ground motion shaking levels that are important for seismic hazard analysis.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Stochastic finite-fault modelling

As stated in previous studies (e.g., Beresnev and Atkinson, 1997; Motazedian and Atkinson, 2005; Boore, 2009), the basic principle of finite-fault modelling is to divide the fault source into several subfaults, where each subfault is regarded as a point source. Each point source radiates an elementary seismic wave. The final time series of ground motion is then obtained by summation of the time series generated by all subfaults, with a proper time delay between subfaults to parameterise the rupture evolution over the fault plane (Fig .1).

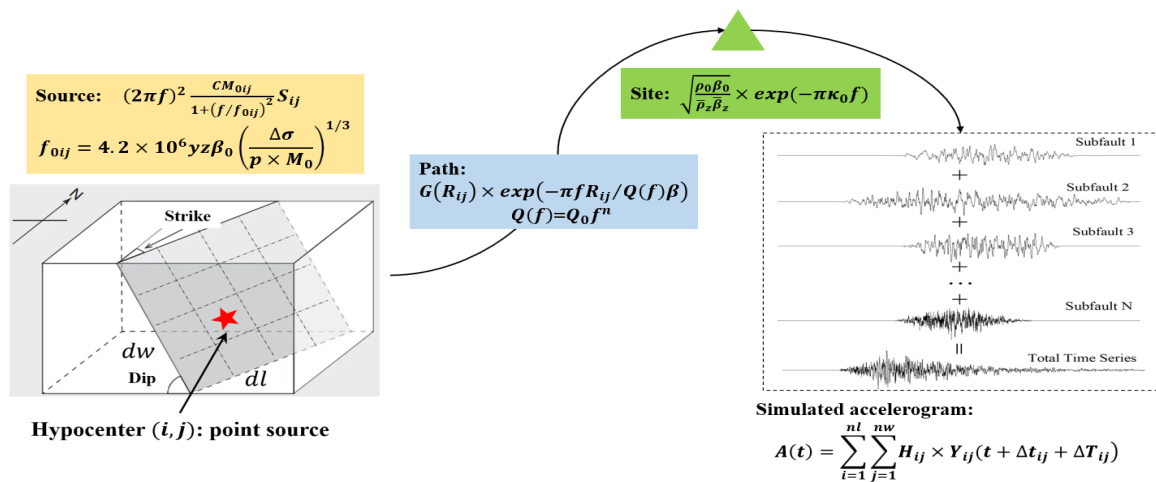


Figure 1. Illustration of finite-fault modelling. A detailed description is provided in the main text.

The Fourier amplitude spectrum (FAS) of acceleration of a point source is given by Eq. (1):

$$FAS_{ij} = E_{ij} \times G_{ij} \times Ae_{ij} \times Am \times An \quad (1)$$

where  $FAS_{ij}$  is FAS of acceleration of the  $ij^{th}$  subfault;  $E_{ij}$  is the earthquake source model;  $G_{ij}$  represents geometric spreading at distance  $R_{ij}$ ;  $Ae_{ij}$  indicates the whole path anelastic attenuation;  $Am$  and  $An$  are the local site amplification and diminishing factor, respectively.

The earthquake source is expressed by Eq. (2):

$$E_{ij} = (2\pi f)^2 \frac{CM_{0ij}}{1+(f/f_{0ij})^2} S_{ij} \quad (2)$$

where,  $C$  is a scaling factor, given as  $C = 0.55 \times 2.0 \times 0.707 / 4\pi\rho_0\beta_0^3$ , whereby  $\rho_0$  and  $\beta_0$  are density and S-wave velocity at the source;  $M_{0ij}$ ,  $f_{0ij}$  and  $S_{ij}$  are seismic moment, corner frequency, and scaling factor for the  $ij^{th}$  subfault, respectively.

$M_{0ij}$  can be determined using Eq. (3):

$$M_{0ij} = \frac{M_0 W_{ij}}{\sum_{l=1}^{nl} \sum_{w=1}^{nw} W_{lw}} \quad (3)$$

where  $M_0$  is the total seismic moment and  $W_{ij}$  is the relative slip weight of the  $ij^{th}$  subfault;  $nl$  and  $nw$  are the number of subfaults along strike and down dip of the finite fault, respectively.

$f_{0ij}$  is defined by Eq. (4) (Tang, 2022a):

$$f_{0ij} = 4.9 \times 10^6 \beta_0 \left( \frac{\Delta\sigma}{p \times M_0} \right)^{1/3} \quad (4a)$$

$$f_{0ij} = 4.2 \times 10^6 yz \beta_0 \left( \frac{\Delta\sigma}{p \times M_0} \right)^{1/3} \quad (4b)$$

in which,  $\Delta\sigma$  is dynamic stress drop,  $y$  is the ratio between rupture velocity and shear-wave velocity, and  $z$  defines the strength of high-frequency radiation and correlates with the slip fraction.

In Eq. (4),  $p$  is the parameter defining the pulsing percentage, determined by Eq. (5):

$$p = \begin{cases} N_R/N, & N_R < N \times pp \\ pp, & N_R \geq N \times pp \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

where  $N_R$  is the cumulative number of pulsing subfaults, and it is determined by the rupture area percentage ( $pp$ );  $N$  is the total number of subfaults.

$S_{ij}$  in Eq. (2), is the scaling factor introduced by Boore (2009), which is used to eliminate the influences of subfault size on spectral amplitude at lower frequencies due to the incoherent summation.  $S_{ij}$  is calculated by Eq. (6):

$$S_{ij} = CS_{ij} \frac{1+(f/f_{0ij})^2}{1+(f/f_{0effij})^2} \quad (6a)$$

where

$$CS_{ij} = \sqrt{N}/H_{ij} \quad (6b)$$

$$f_{0effij} = f_{0ij}/\sqrt{CS_{ij}} \quad (6c)$$

$H_{ij}$  in Eq. (6b) is the high-frequency scaling factor. The acceleration-based  $H_{ij}$  is expressed by Eq. (7a), which can be simplified as Eq. (7b) (Boore, 2009):

$$H_{ij} = (M_0/M_{0ij}) \times \sqrt{\sum \left( \frac{f_0^2 f}{f_0^2 + f^2} \right)^2 / N \sum \left( \frac{f_{0ij}^2 f}{f_{0ij}^2 + f^2} \right)^2} \quad (7a)$$

$$H_{ij} = \sqrt{N} \left( \frac{f_0}{f_{0ij}} \right)^2 \quad (7b)$$

Here,  $f_0$  is the overall corner frequency for the rupture, determined from Eq. (8) (Tang, 2022a):

$$f_0 = 4.9 \times 10^6 \beta_0 \left( \frac{\Delta\sigma}{M_0} \right)^{1/3} \quad (8a)$$

$$f_0 = 4.2 \times 10^6 \gamma z \beta_0 \left( \frac{\Delta\sigma}{M_0} \right)^{1/3} \quad (8b)$$

The geometrical spreading  $G_{ij}$  in Eq. (1) relates to subfault distance  $R_{ij}$  from the receiver, and accounts for the regional geometric attenuation of seismic-wave amplitudes along the wave-propagation path.

$Ae_{ij}$  in Eq. (1) is expressed by Eq. (9):

$$Ae_{ij} = \exp \left( \frac{-\pi f R_{ij}}{Q \beta_0} \right) \quad (9)$$

where  $Q$  is the regional quality factor which is inversely related to anelastic attenuation.

$Am$  and  $An$  in Eq. (1) can be calculated by Eq. (10) and (11), respectively:

$$Am = \sqrt{\frac{\rho_0 \beta_0}{\bar{\rho}_z \bar{\beta}_z}} \quad (10)$$

where  $\bar{\rho}_z$  and  $\bar{\beta}_z$  are the time-averaged density and shear-wave velocity over the depth corresponding to a quarter wavelength.

$$An = \exp(-\pi \kappa_0 f) \quad (11)$$

where  $\kappa_0$  represents the spectral decay slope at high frequencies.

The final time series of the finite-fault source can then be computed using Eq. (12):

$$A(t) = \sum_{i=1}^{n_l} \sum_{j=1}^{n_w} H_{ij} \times Y_{ij}(t + \Delta t_{ij} + \Delta T_{ij}) \quad (12)$$

where  $A(t)$  is the total time series of the seismic signal at a site;  $Y_{ij}(t)$  is the signal of the  $ij^{\text{th}}$  subfault, obtained from the inverse Fourier transform of  $FAS_{ij}$  (Eq. 1);  $\Delta t_{ij}$  is the delay time of the  $ij^{\text{th}}$  subfault along the path; and  $\Delta T_{ij}$  is the delay time for  $ij^{\text{th}}$  subsource and is proportional to the rise time of the subfault ( $T_{0ij}$ ).

## 2.2 The GMSS code

We use the code package GMSS2.0 that builds on EXSIM\_DMB (Boore, 2009) and EXSIM\_V3 (Crane and Motazedian, 2014) and thus is an enhanced software package for stochastic finite-fault ground motion simulation. Particularly, GMSS2.0 has the following features:

- Every step is transparent, enabling users to check every single module and function, and make changes based on specific requirements.
- Two different options are included for calculating corner frequency and rise time, namely rupture-velocity dependent and independent models, thus improving ground motion estimation at high frequencies.
- Rupture dimensions are estimated using empirical relationships (Table 1).
- Site-specific simulations with various site responses for different sites are possible as alternative options.
- Computationally efficient with the application of parallel computing toolbox in MATLAB.

The workflow chart of the GMSS2.0 code/algorithm is shown in Fig. 2.

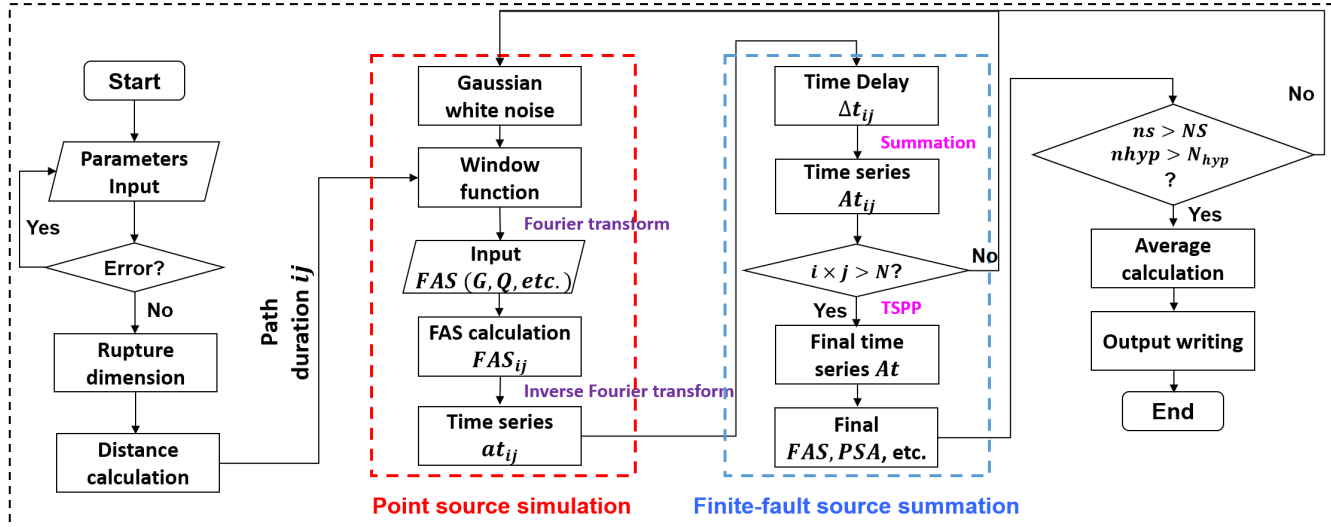


Figure 2. Workflow chart of GMSS2.0 code.

Generally, users need to provide three types of input in the “Parameters Input” module, namely, (i) the general input parameters, such as the time interval ( $dt$ ), number of simulations per hypocenter ( $NS$ ), and number of hypocenters ( $N_{hyp}$ ); (ii) source parameters, such as strike and dip angle of the fault, stress drop ( $\Delta\sigma$ ), corner-frequency indicator, etc; and (iii) site parameters, including the location of sites (longitude and latitude, or distance and azimuth), site condition ( $V_{S30}$  and  $\kappa_0$ ), etc. For determining the rupture, GMSS2.0 provides four published source-scaling relationships (Table 1), including ones developed for the stable continental region, subduction interface region, and China mainland region.

Table 1. Rupture scaling relationship embodied in GMSS2.0.

Relationship	WC94	L10	T17	C19
Reference	Wells and Coppersmith (1994)	Leonard (2010)	Thingbaijam et al. (2017)	Cheng et al. (2019)
Normal	$FL = 10^{-1.88+0.50M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.14+0.35M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.54+0.60M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.46+0.40M}$	$FL = 10^{-1.722+0.485M}$ $FW = 10^{-0.829+0.323M}$	$FL = 10^{-4.02+0.83M}$ $FW = 10^{-2.13+0.51M}$
Reverse	$FL = 10^{-2.42+0.58M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.61+0.41M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.54+0.60M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.46+0.40M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.693+0.614M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.669+0.435M}$	$FL = 10^{-3.27+0.72M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.67+0.44M}$
Strike-slip	$FL = 10^{-2.57+0.62M}$ $FW = 10^{-0.76+0.27M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.50+0.60M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.49+0.40M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.943+0.681M}$ $FW = 10^{-0.543+0.261M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.45+0.61M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.38+0.41M}$
Undefined	$FL = 10^{-2.44+0.59M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.01+0.32M}$	* $FL = 10^{-2.59+0.60M}$ * $FW = 10^{-1.60+0.40M}$	† $FL = 10^{-2.412+0.583M}$ † $FW = 10^{-0.88+0.366M}$	$FL = 10^{-2.67+0.63M}$ $FW = 10^{-1.38+0.40M}$

(Note:  $FL$  and  $FW$  are the fault length and width respectively;  $M$  is the moment magnitude;  $FW$  in L10 is obtained using the correlation between fault area and  $FL$ , assuming the fault is rectangular;  $FW$  in Cea19 is obtained using the correlation between  $FL$  and  $FW$ . The unit for  $FL$  and  $FW$  is km in this study; “\*” means this scaling relationship is specifically for Stable Continental Region; “†” means this scaling relationship is specifically for Subduction Interface)

Considering the variations in engineering demands, GMSS2.0 computes seven different distances in the distance matrices, including  $R_{rup}$  (closest distance to fault rupture) and  $R_{jb}$  (closest distance to the surface projection of fault rupture). The procedures in the box marked red in Fig.3 are the simulation procedures for a single subfault, following stochastic point-source simulation procedures (Boore, 2003; Tang, et al. 2021). The procedures in the blue box define the additional steps for finite-fault simulations in which the time series of each subfault are summed with proper time delays. The final simulation outputs provided by GMSS2.0

include the time series of one or several random simulations, averaged intensities (i.e., PGA, PGV, PGD,  $I_A$  (Arias intensity), CAV (Cumulative Absolute Velocity), PSA and duration), averaged FAS, Husid plot, and more. Further information can be found in Tang (2022b). The user manual and source code are available at <https://github.com/Y-Tang99/GMSS2.0>.

### 3 Simulation of the 2021 $M_w$ 5.9 Woods Point Earthquake

For better ground motion characterisation (GMC) and seismic hazard assessment purposes, we perform stochastic finite-fault simulations of ground motions recorded by 36 stations using the GMSS2.0 code. The raw data have been processed as follows:

- Bandpass filter seismic records, using a 4<sup>th</sup> order acausal Butterworth filter with a frequency range of 0.05 Hz and variable high-frequency cut-off that varies due to station-dependent instrument sampling rate.
- Remove instrument response using station XML files generated by Obspy ([https://docs.obspy.org/tutorial/code\\_snippets/stationxml\\_file\\_from\\_scratch.html](https://docs.obspy.org/tutorial/code_snippets/stationxml_file_from_scratch.html)).
- Determine signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) for each station at 20 frequencies of interest for all 3 components; discard observations with low SNR (i.e., SNR < 5.0).
- Smooth the FAS using the window proposed by Katsuaki and Ohmachi (1998).

We determine the parameter values for simulations by regression analysis of FAS at 20 discrete frequencies ranging from 0.1 Hz to 20 Hz. The site amplification model follows Seyhan and Stewart (2014), but the linear term ( $V_{S30}$ -scaling) coefficient is modified from the local  $V_{S30}$  values of the 36 stations, while the nonlinear term is computed using the local PGA values on the reference rock site with  $V_{S30} = 760$  m/s. Geometric spreading and anelastic attenuation are determined using the functional format proposed by Boore et al. (2009), where we adopt a bilinear geometric spreading, and a bilinear Q factor (when plotted in log-log format). The source duration is determined as  $0.27/f_0$  (Tang, 2022a) while the path duration was determined following Boore and Thompson (2014). The source parameters, including the seismic moment and corner frequency, are determined by matching the theoretical Brune model of the Fourier displacement spectrum (Brune, 1970) with the reference spectrum obtained from the regression. Finally, the dynamic stress drop value is determined by minimizing the absolute residual value of 5%-damped PSA between observations and simulations over all distance and frequency ranges.

The geographical locations of stations selected for this study are shown in Fig. 3. Simulation results are displayed in Fig. 4, and the corresponding residuals are given in Fig. 5. Comparisons of 5%-damped PSA with six GMMs (listed in Table 2) are shown in Fig. 6.

The simulations in Fig. 4 are site-specific with various  $V_{S30}$  values, indicating that the simulated PSA's generally match the observations for the hypocentral distance range 67.6 km (CLIF station) to 439.1 km (AUUHS) and for spectral periods ranging from 0.05 s to 3.0 s (note that station CNB, only the range 0.08 s to 3.0 s was usable due to low sampling rate). The mean residual between simulations and observations over all distances over the spectral periods of interest is shown in Fig. 5. The average residual is very close to 0, indicating that the input parameters have been well calibrated for this event based on the available data.

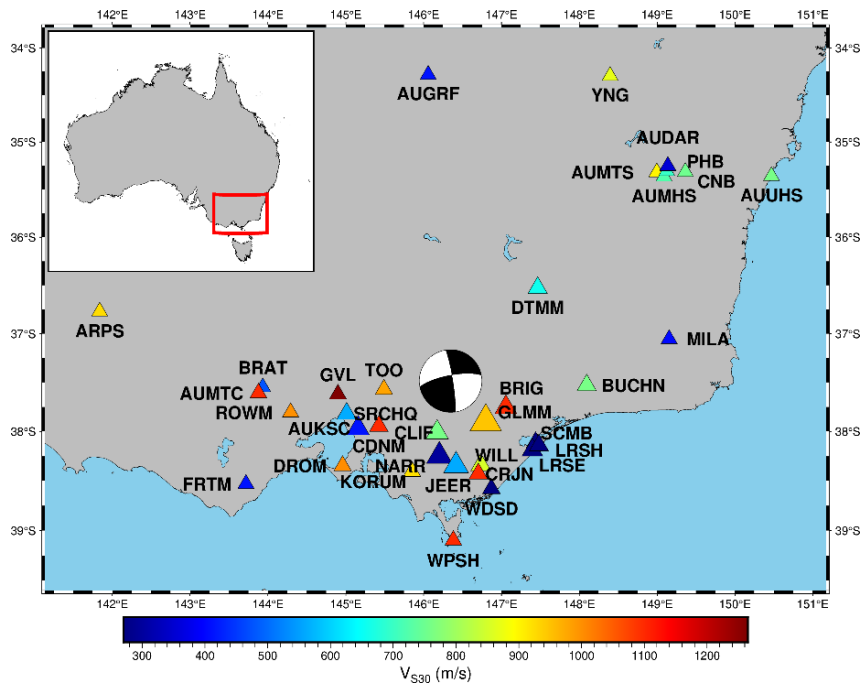


Figure 3. Selected stations in this study (different size of the symbol indicates the PGA value recorded by the station).

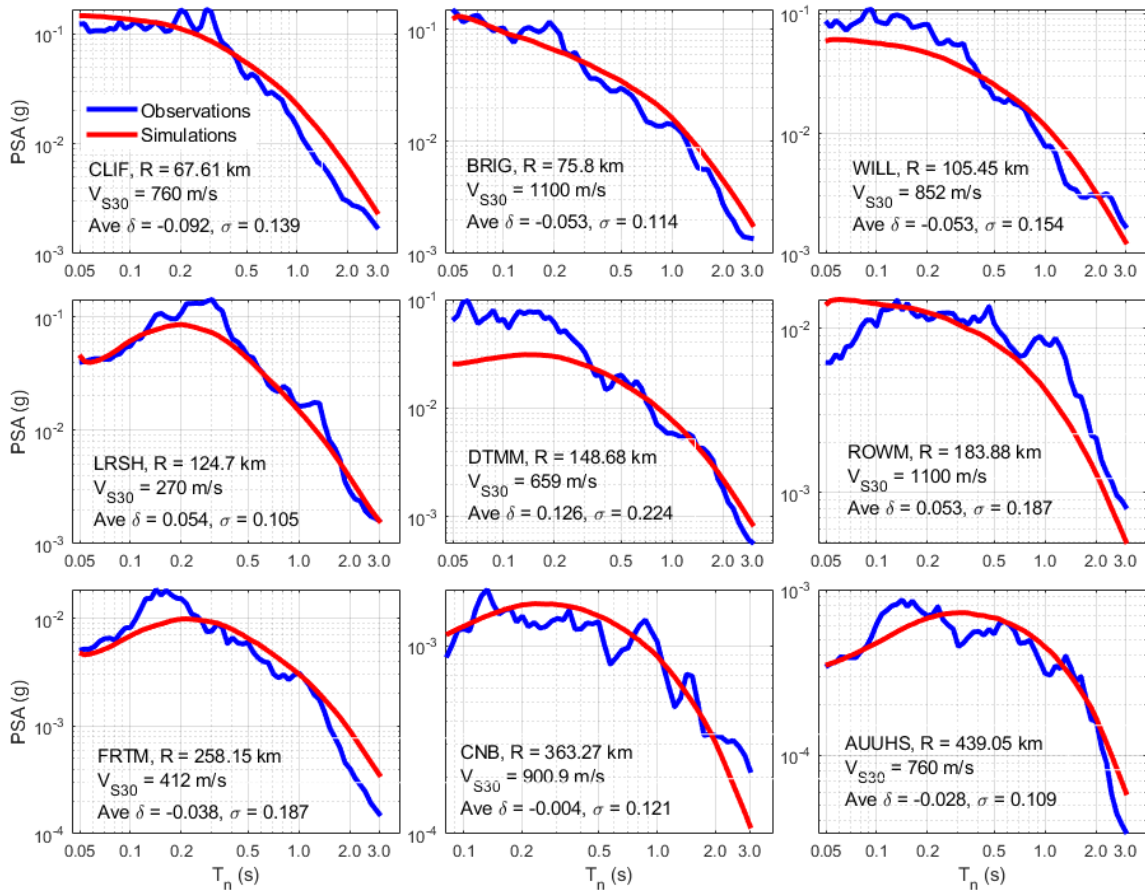


Figure 4. Comparison of simulated 5%-damped pseudo-spectral acceleration (PSA) and observations for nine stations. Observations are given as the geometric mean of the two horizontal components.

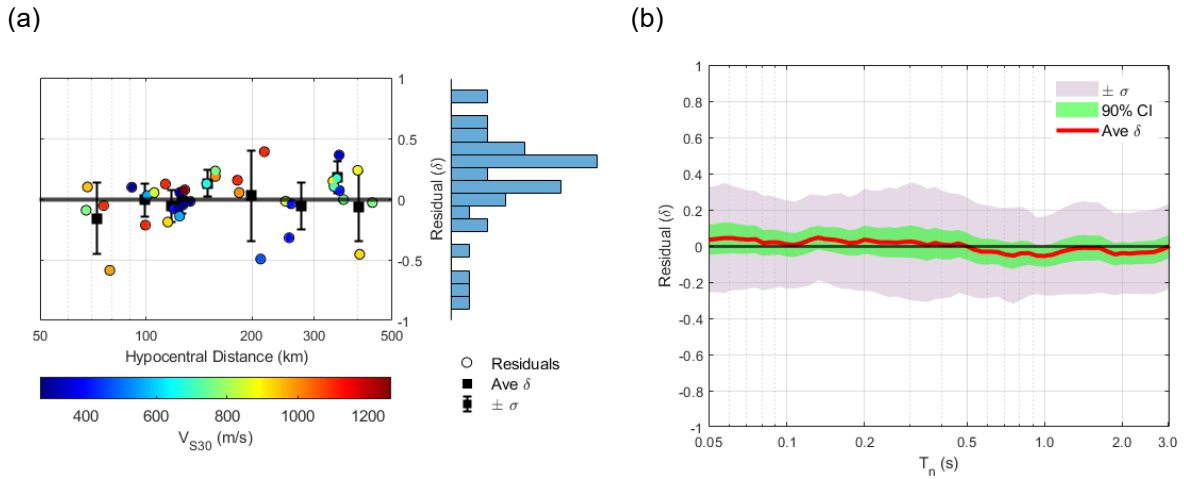


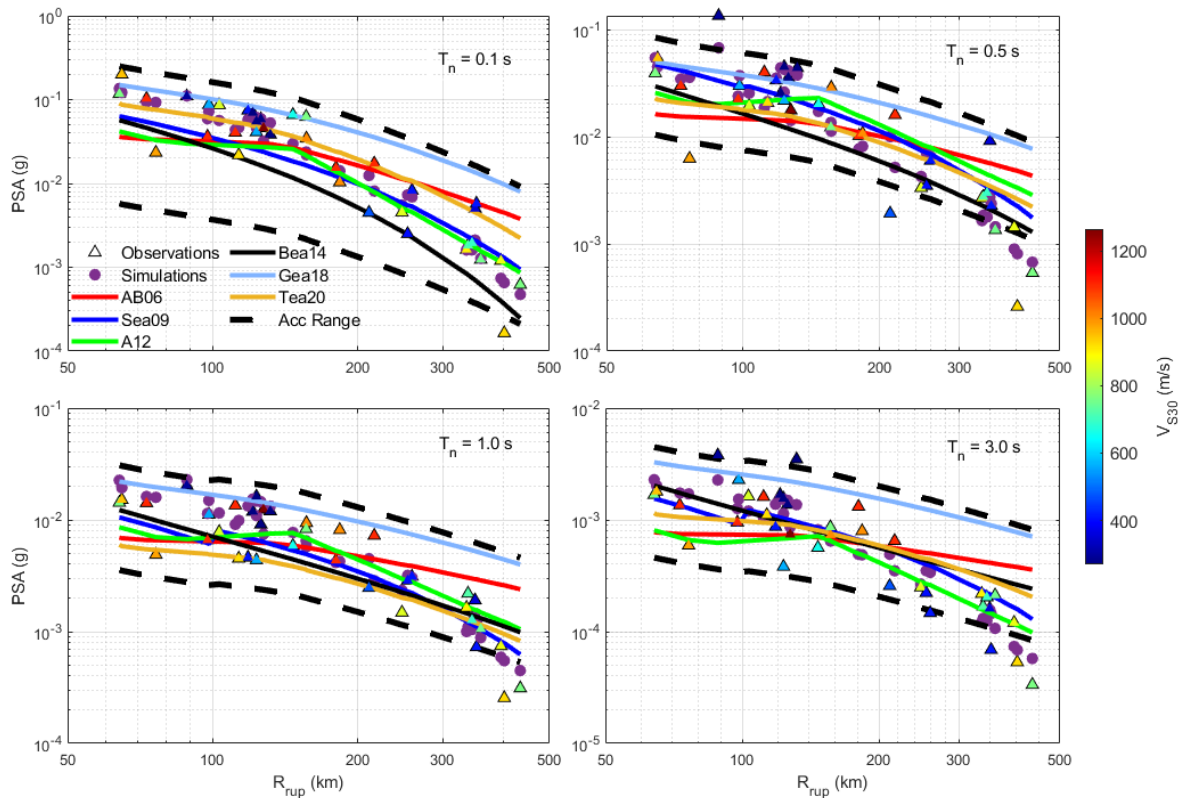
Figure 5. Overall residuals between simulations and observations of 5%-damped PSA, (a) Residuals with respect to distance (the black square indicates the average residual over various distance bins; the corresponding central distances for each bin are 72.63, 99.19, 117.83, 126.31, 149.20, 198.44, 275.34, 349.30 and 401.35 km;  $\sigma$  indicates the standard deviation of each distance bin); (b) Residuals with respect to natural periods between 0.05 – 3.0 s, the green shaded area marks the 90% confidence interval.  $\delta$  indicates the average residual, and  $\sigma$  represents the standard deviation. Observations are given as the geometric mean of the two horizontal components.

In terms of ground-motion models (GMM), the AB06 model is a typical GMM developed for Central Eastern North America (CENA) but also applied in other stable continental regions (Atkinson and Boore, 2006). The Sea09 model is simulation-based, and we only consider the non-cratonic condition in this study (Somerville, et al., 2009). The A12 model is a GMM specifically developed for South-eastern Australia (SEA) (Allen 2012). The Bea14 model is an NGA-West2 model which is mainly for active tectonic regions (Boore et al., 2014). The Gea18 model is a comprehensive averaged GMM that considers 17 different models with different weights at different spectral periods and is typically applied in stable continental regions (Goulet et al. 2018). The Tea20 model is a regionally adjustable GMM developed for intraplate events (Tang et al., 2020). All GMMs are adjusted to the average site condition  $V_{S30} = 725.1$  m/s.

Table 2. Selected GMMs in this study

No.	GMM	Region	Type	Distance	Reference $V_{S30}$ (m/s)	Reference
1	AB06	CENA	Semi-simulated (Finite-fault source)	$R_{rup}$	760	Atkinson and Boore (2006)
2	Sea09	Australia	Simulated (broadband)	$R_{JB}$	865	Somerville et al. (2009)
3	A12	SEA	Semi-simulated (Finite-fault source)	$R_{rup}$	820	Allen (2012)
4	Bea14	Crustal active	Empirical	$R_{JB}$	760	Boore et al. (2014)
5	Gea18	CENA	Combined	$R_{rup}$	3000	Goulet et al. (2018)
6	Tea20	Regionally adjustable	Semi-simulated (Point source)	$R_{eff}$	760	Tang et al. (2019, 2020)





*Figure 6. Comparison of 5%-damped pseudo-spectral acceleration (PSA) and six GMMs at four spectral periods. The bound between dashed lines indicates the acceptance range defined by the GMMs (Goulet et al., 2015). The GMMs have been adjusted to the average site with  $V_{S30} = 725.1$  m/s.*

Next., we discuss the comparisons between GMM-predictions and our simulations for 5%-damped PSA for four spectral periods (Fig. 6). We find that the simulated PSA values generally match the observations and lie within the acceptance range of the selected GMMs. The acceptance range is defined as the range between the upper and lower bounds of the selected GMMs. The largest GMM prediction from all models at any period is selected as a reference point, to which 15% is added (this number is selected based on judgment to increase the allowable range, pp. 25 in Goulet et al. (2015)). The upper-bound spectrum is then defined by applying the ratio of the reference point to the average spectrum. The lower-bound spectrum is obtained from the same process (Goulet et al., 2015). This indicates our simulation results are acceptable. Generally, the performance of the GMMs is better at shorter periods and closer distances. As observed by Hault et al. (2021), the local GMMs (Sea09, A12, and Tea20) perform better and generally reflect the ground motion attenuation characteristics of this event. The AB06 model appears to underestimate ground motions for distances less than 150 km and overestimates at distances above 150 km. In contrast, the Gea18 model overestimates ground motions for the entire distance range considered in the study.

Our result may be a reference to inspecting the overall performance of the CENA models for predicting the Australian ground motions. Because there are no recordings at short distances for this event, it is currently impossible to judge their performance at close distances, even though Allen and Atkinson (2007) found that the attenuation properties between SEA and CENA are similar at short distances. The Bea14 model (for active tectonic regions) leads to underestimates at short periods, which is also shown in Hault et al. (2021).

## 4 Closing Remarks

This study analyses synthetic and observed ground motions of the 2021  $M_w$ 5.9 Woods Point earthquake, using the recently introduced ground-motion simulation code GMSS2.0. This software package implements stochastic finite-fault ground motions in low-to-moderate seismicity regions where instrument observations are scarce. We describe the basic principles and features of GMSS2.0 and then apply the code to simulate the ground motions of the 2021  $M_w$ 5.9 Woods Point earthquake. We achieve good agreement between simulations and field observations, with the input parameters determined from 36 selected stations. We also compared our simulations with six GMMs considered in the NSHA program; the results show that the simulated ground motions are within the acceptance range defined by the GMMs.

In a follow-up study, we will generate a large simulation-based dataset at a wide distance range with varying source, path, and site parameters to conduct a detailed sensitivity analysis. The corresponding results will facilitate future work on regional PSHA in the context of ground motion characterisation over a wide distance range in the absence of observational data.

## 5 Acknowledgment

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