



# Emergency Leaders for Climate Action

## **Six-point plan for the incoming Federal Government.**

We cannot afford another three years of stalling, stuff ups and smokescreens. The incoming federal government must step up to the plate with the policies and resources to keep communities and emergency responders safe. Implementing the below six point plan must be their number 1 priority.

### **Strong, Immediate Emissions Cuts**

The Australian Government must urgently develop and mobilise strategies in all sectors of the economy to achieve a 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, recognising that climate change has become an existential threat. Climate change-driven extreme weather events are destroying lives, livelihoods and our environment. Australia is more exposed than most other countries to catastrophic bushfires, floods, storms, cyclones, heatwaves and droughts. The lives, safety, and prosperity of all Australians will depend on what the next Australian Government does following the 2022 election to redress a decade of climate inaction.

### **Strong Leadership And Collaboration**

Australia desperately needs strong national leadership, credible plans and consensus-building as the foundations for strong climate action. The incoming Australian Government should expressly reject the so-called “climate wars” that have seriously harmed Australia’s international standing, divided our society and exposed our citizens to unnecessary risks. Australia and the world face a worsening climate crisis that scientists say is an existential threat due to insufficient action around the world. The United Nations Secretary-General described our country as a “hold out”. Australia must lead and encourage other countries to also act, not continue to lag.

### **Community First**

Communities around the country suffering due to climate change must be at the heart of all emergency and disaster prevention, preparation, response and recovery plans and arrangements. Governments at all levels - Australian, state territory and local - must significantly increase funding that builds community resilience, improves infrastructure, and increases the capabilities of emergency response and recovery agencies, with a greater focus on planning and coordination between all levels of government. At present far more money is spent on disaster response and recovery than on proactive measures to reduce disaster risk. This is short-sighted and unsustainable as the frequency and severity of extreme weather disasters increases. The incoming government should review performance of the National Recovery and Resilience Agency, its allocation of funding, and seeming inability to perform its legislated role.

### **Properly Resourced Emergency Services**

The Australian Government should provide additional ongoing funding to state and territory governments to increase the size and capability of both volunteer and career emergency services. Increasing the use of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), or creating a new disaster force will reduce Australia's defence capabilities, result in expensive duplication and waste, and hinder coordination of response and recovery efforts. The increasing demands of climate-driven disasters on existing volunteers is unsustainable, while increasing community expectations of current emergency services and the ADF are becoming unrealistic. First-responders are being overwhelmed by the size, intensity and frequency of unprecedented extreme weather events with inadequate budgets reflecting the more benign threat levels of the 1990s.

The Australian Government must cease adding fuel to the fire through fossil fuel subsidies, and instead direct those funds towards climate solutions, including supporting affected workers and communities, and properly resourcing our emergency services to deal with escalating climate-fuelled disasters.

### **National Risk Assessment And Climate Strategy**

Australia's outdated and under-resourced climate change strategies have proven to be ineffective. Since 2013 the government has intentionally shut down and de-funded key climate research capabilities while failing to implement recommendations from reviews including the National Resilience Task Force and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The incoming Australian Government must urgently restore climate research funding and capabilities cut over the past nine years, immediately complete a national climate change risk assessment, create a national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy to limit global warming, build community resilience, strengthen infrastructure, and increase response and recovery capabilities. National Cabinet should be regularly briefed on progress by a standing committee on disaster management, similar in structure and governance to the Australian Health Protection Principals' Committee.

### **Adaptation Could Become Futile**

"Adaptation" on a scale necessary to deal with the current trajectory of catastrophic climate change will become futile. The Australian Government must ensure that adaptation programs are rolled out in parallel with urgent emissions reduction programs. It is dangerous and self-defeating to consider these as mutually exclusive. As the impacts of climate change-driven disasters worsen it will become increasingly difficult for the world to adapt, and increasing amounts of money will have to be diverted to long-term recovery following large-scale, compounding disasters. The longer the Australian Government delays making necessary emissions cuts, the more quickly dangerous "tipping points" will be reached with emergency services overwhelmed by more frequent, intense disasters destroying more and more lives, livelihoods and communities.