

MEDIA RELEASE



TUESDAY, 20 APRIL 2021

“ILL-PREPARED”: FORMER DEFENCE LEADERS SOUND ALARM OVER CLIMATE SECURITY THREAT

The Australian Security Leaders Climate Group includes current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and defence sector and security practitioners. Its leadership includes former Chief of the Defence Force Professor Admiral Chris Barrie AC (retd), former Deputy Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force Air Vice-Marshal John Blackburn AO (retd), former Defence Department Director of Preparedness and Mobilisation Adjunct Associate Professor Cheryl Durrant and former Australian Army Officer of 20 years Major Michael Thomas (retd).

The group says a Whole-of-Nation Climate and Security Risk Assessment is required for Australia to fully comprehend the scale, risk and impacts of climate change on Australia and our region, including on social cohesion, energy security and import and export markets. According to the group, the assessment should also outline a framework for how our nation can adequately respond to these threats.

The group aims to make climate an immediate security priority in Australia through raising public awareness on the security threat of climate change, undertaking strategic research, developing policy recommendations and working with government and department officials to secure action on climate-security threats.

Quotes attributable to former Chief of the Defence Force Professor Admiral Chris Barrie (retd):

“As ex-Service members and experienced practitioners of national and international security who have witnessed up-close the devastation of war and crisis, we recognise that climate change is a fundamental threat to the security and prosperity of all Australians.

“Across our region, climate change is an existential threat to many Indo-Pacific countries that are especially vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events.

“Yet Australia is ill-prepared for climate impacts, with climate-security risks not being fully assessed or understood in Australia

“We are being left behind, with some of our closest allies already taking action. In the US, the Biden Administration has elevated climate change to a high-level national security issue, with significant stature within national security decision-making.”

Quote attributable to former Deputy Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal John Blackburn AO (retd):

“The first duty of the Australian Government must be the safety and security of its citizens. Today, the Government is failing to address the growing impacts of climate change and therefore failing to protect its own people. Unlike the pandemic, we cannot quarantine ourselves from climate change and there is no vaccine.”

Quote attributable to former Australian Army Officer, Major Michael Thomas (retd)

“We call on the Australian Government to urgently undertake a comprehensive Whole-of-Nation Climate and Security Risk Assessment and stand ready to assist in this urgent and necessary task.”

Quote attributable to former Defence Department Director of Preparedness and Mobilisation, Adjunct Associate Professor Cheryl Durrant:

“This critical review is a key step to fill the major strategic gap that currently exists in Australia. It is only through understanding the risks posed by climate change that we can then act to mitigate these clear and present dangers.”

MEDIA CONTACT: Luke Taylor, 0449 641 160

The Australian Security Leaders Climate Group is a new non-partisan network of Australian security and policy professionals that is working to reframe the climate debate and make climate an immediate security priority in Australia, through assessing the full level of risk posed by climate change and building resilience for local and global protection.