

MEDIA RELEASE

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US-Canberra talks should focus on climate disruption — not just China — as the greatest present threat to global security: Former defence chief.

Former Chief of the Australian Defence Force Chris Barrie says climate disruption must be a keystone of alliance talks when the United States' Secretaries for State and Defense meet with their Australian counterparts in Washington for the annual AUSMIN talks on Thursday 16 September.

Retired Admiral Chris Barrie said:

"A security alliance is only solidly built when partners are open and honest with each other about the biggest threats they face and commit to acting on them together. Climate cannot be put in the naughty corner any longer, because it is the biggest threat we all face. It must take its place at the centre of the table."

"If these AUSMIN talks do not include climate disruption as a primary issue, that is a lost opportunity and a strategic policy-making failure."

"Both the US President Joe Biden and Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III have recognised climate disruption as an 'existential' threat to contemporary society, and unlike Australia they are making climate risks a key focus of their security policy."

"Consistent with the priority that President Biden has placed on climate change and the implications for security, climate policy in the leadup to the COP26 talks in Glasgow in November must be a priority now because AUSMIN is an important venue for sharing ideas and formulating appropriate responses on priority matters in our relationship."

"It is clear that climate disruption, like nuclear war, is the greatest threat to global, national and human security. If the strategic road ahead is to be successfully navigated, we must shine a strong light on the risk that climate change will cause social and political breakdown within nations, and in the relations between them."

Admiral Barrie pointed to the upcoming global climate talks in Glasgow as the last chance to get the world on to a scientifically literate pathway for very rapid emissions reductions and said Australia's present position is undermining that effort.

Admiral Barrie is an executive member of Australian Security Leaders Climate Group, who's recently released report, *Missing in Action: Responding to Australia's climate & security failure*, called on the Australian government to prevent devastating climate impacts through adaptation and by mobilising all resources necessary to reach zero emissions as fast as possible.

"Australia has been "missing in action" on climate security risks. We keep falling behind our allies and failing in our responsibility to protect our own people."

Media contact: Luke Taylor, 0449 641 160

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The [Australian Security Leaders Climate Group](http://www.aslclg.org) 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.