

**AUSTRALIAN
SECURITY
LEADERS
CLIMATE
GROUP**

MISSING IN ACTION

**Responding to climate-security risks:
Initial proposals to the Australian Government**

aslcg.org

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CLIMATE-SECURITY RISKS NEED TO BE ASSESSED

Climate change now presents a grave, and potentially existential, threat to society and human security.

Today, unimaginable new climate extremes confront us: record-breaking droughts and floods, cruel heatwaves, unstoppable bushfires, broken infrastructure, and coastal inundation. Worse is expected to come.

In vulnerable countries, governments have collapsed and civil wars have erupted, forcefully displacing millions of people looking for a safe haven.

Instability is on the march. A new insecurity shadows our lives and the relations between nations.

Responding adequately to the climate threat is fundamental to the survival of the nation.

But Australia has repeatedly ignored the risks and is ill-prepared for the security implications of devastating climate impacts at home and in the Asia-Pacific, the highest-risk region in the world.

Unless rectified, this will place great pressure on the Australian Defence Force, and emergency and disaster relief agencies, to pick up the pieces in the face of accelerating climate impacts. Higher levels of warming will stretch them beyond their capacity to respond.

Australia is falling behind its allies, and is failing its responsibilities as a global citizen and its duty to protect its own people.

ASLCG's assessment is that inaction by Australian governments has left the nation poorly prepared to face global warming's consequences. National leadership has been absent and Australia has been "missing in action" on climate-security risks.

Many of the solutions are at our disposal. Australia has the ability to act now, and needs to act now.

Focus should be on the root causes of climate warming, principally eliminating emissions much faster than proposed, rather than just the responding to the symptoms.

In this report, ASLCG propose to the government a set of initial actions in a climate and security plan to Protect, Prevent and Prepare, starting with a realistic assessment of the risks.

INITIAL PROPOSALS TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

An urgent Climate and Security Risk Assessment

- Appoint a well-resourced, independently-chaired, expert panel to urgently conduct a comprehensive Climate and Security Risk Assessment, using the best available information, to report publicly within six months.
- Includes all relevant departments; risk, science, security professionals and experts; and international advisors.
- Draw on the experience and analysis of our allies and the Asia-Pacific region.

Establish a dedicated Office of Climate Threat Intelligence

- A “full spectrum” strategic approach by building an Australian climate risk “early warning system” capacity to identify and respond to current or emerging direct climate risks to national interests.
- Ongoing support to key stakeholders across the policy and innovation spheres as Australia’s national interest is threatened by severe, but increasingly plausible, climate change scenarios.
- Maximise the collective intelligence capacity, and break down thematic, resource and organisational silos, to give longer-term perspectives, and provide regular assessments by consistent monitoring and evaluation of climate-security risks.

Triennial National Climate Risk Assessments

- Based on the model used in the USA, with triennial reports to Parliament, prepared by a high-level expert group working with relevant agencies including BoM, CSIRO and university researchers, to provide a regular, publicly-available assessment of climate trends, risks and impacts.
- A valuable tool for policy-making, in providing both national and regional projections, impacts and scenarios, and hence mitigation and adaptation frameworks.
- Provides a rigorous risk-management framework for government policy-making and planning across a wide range of portfolios, including transport, health, infrastructure, energy, environment, emergency services, and defence.

Build an Australian National Prevention & Resilience Framework

- Prepare a prevention and mitigation roadmap based on the best scientific advice and a precautionary risk-management framework.
- We must prepare for a world of rapidly changing global alliances and institutions; we cannot rely primarily on reactive responses as we have, given the growing scale and complexity of the threats we face as a nation.
- Military concepts of protection, prevention, preparedness and leadership will be critically important in addressing the climate emergency.

PREVENT. PREPARE. PROTECT.

A Climate–Security Risk Action Plan

Demonstrate leadership

- **Acknowledge** climate disruption is an existential risk to society, a threat to the stability of nations, and the relationships between them if we act too late, or inadequately.
- **Seize** the initiative by conducting informed, national public conversations and working with all levels of government, communities, business and academia in carrying out regular National Climate Risk Assessments.
- **Show** the Australian people that our leaders care by committing to protecting the Australian people with actionable and credible climate plans to safeguard our future.

Assess climate risks

- **Appoint** an independent, expert panel to urgently conduct a comprehensive Climate and Security Risk Assessment, using the best available information.
- **Establish** an Office of Climate Threat Intelligence.
- **Assess** the threats and impacts of climate disruption with brutal honesty, identifying the worst, as well as most likely, cases and considering the full range of probabilities.

Coordinate and cooperate

- **Coordinate** a holistic, whole-of-government approach, building capacity across the public service and government agencies, and at all levels of government.
- **Cooperate** with big and small Asia-Pacific governments to build alliances for climate action, understanding that cooperation rather than conflict is key to responding to the climate crisis.
- **Build** an Australian National Prevention and Resilience Framework with coherent processes across critical areas including energy and water, logistics, health, industry and agriculture, research and environment.

Act and invest with urgency

- **Protect** the most vulnerable communities, nations and ecological systems.
- **Prevent** devastating climate impacts by mobilising all the resources necessary to reach zero emissions as fast as possible. Cooperate to develop the global capacity to prevent irreversible tipping points and drawdown greenhouse gases back to safer conditions in the long term.
- **Prepare** to manage the risks and respond to the challenges of living in a climate-change-disrupted world with a responsibility to prepare and prevent.