

Nuclear and gas strategies will weaken Australia's national security, warn former security leaders and analysis

A group of former and current defence and security leaders and analysts has issued an open letter to Australia's political leaders, warning about the dire implications of the current climate policy trajectory. They express deep alarm at the disruptive threat posed by climate change to national security, regional stability, and the safety, wellbeing and livelihoods of all Australians.

The security threat posed by climate disruption is both immediate and escalating, as emphasised by the US Defense Secretary and senior security analysts in the AUKUS trio. "Weak climate policy weakens our national security," says Admiral Chris Barrie (Ret.), former Chief of the Australian Defence Force. "Current climate policy directions by the major political parties will lead to higher temperatures and more dangerous climate impacts for human security. Our defence forces are being stretched thin by the need to respond to more frequent and severe natural disasters. This is not a future problem; it is happening now."

The open letter opposes proposals by the Liberal and National Parties to further weaken, or remove, Australia's already inadequate climate targets. Further, the suggestion that nuclear power is a viable solution within the next critical decade displays a profound ignorance of the impacts of climate change on national and human security. Global warming is intensifying natural disasters, placing immense strain on emergency response capabilities and defence resources, with the ADF increasingly diverted to disaster response, stretching its operational capacity.

The actions and plans by both the Labor government and the LNP to expand Australia's fossil gas production and exports are contrary to long-standing and sound scientific advice that all nations, especially large fossil fuel producers, must not licence new capacity as proposed in the government gas strategy, and must reduce emissions to zero as quickly as possible. The group warned that time is running out and that predatory delay by politicians captured by the fossil fuel industry and other vested interests will result in millions of deaths worldwide and unlivable extremes for more Australians.

Fueling climate impacts here and in Asia and the Pacific, to which these policies would contribute, will lead to major humanitarian crises and governmental instability, necessitating increased Australian responses and support, not least for rising levels of climate refugees. Rising sea levels and extreme weather events already threaten Australia's critical infrastructure, disrupting our food security, water security and supply lines.

"The urgency for robust climate action could not be clearer," Admiral Barrie emphasised. "We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly and transition to a zero-emissions economy. This includes phasing out fossil fuel extraction, ceasing new gas and coal projects, and rejecting slow and expensive nuclear power in favour of fast and reliable renewable energy sources. Strengthening climate resilience through infrastructure investment, and enhancing disaster preparedness for the climate impacts we can no longer avoid, is paramount."

Climate change must be addressed as a clear and present risk, not as a poorly understood political differentiator thriving on community division. The group calls upon all major political parties to recognize the inseparable link between climate policy, national and human security. Weak climate policy compromises safety, the economy, and strategic interests. The group urges commitment to sound emissions reduction targets, acceleration of the transition to renewable energy, enhancement of climate resilience and regional cooperation rather than conflict.

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The group is composed of former military leaders, security experts, and strategic analysts dedicated to addressing the security threats posed by climate change and advocating for robust climate policies to ensure national, regional and global security.