

Budget Deepens Australia's Climate Security Blind Spot

'Australia still flying blind on climate risk' – experts warn government has missed a critical opportunity.

The Albanese Government has missed a critical opportunity in the 2025 Federal Budget to deliver on a key climate commitment: the development of a National Climate Risk Assessment.

The lack of continuing funding in the budget raises the question of whether the project has been abandoned unfinished. There appears to be no budget allocation and no funding for ongoing assessment of climate risks.

Despite promises made in the 2022–23 Budget to undertake this essential work, the Assessment has not been completed. This leaves Australia without a national framework to understand and manage escalating climate risks—at a time when floods, heatwaves, and bushfires are becoming more frequent and more destructive.

“Right now, Australia is effectively flying blind into a future of worsening climate threats, with no plan and no up to date assessment of the risks,” said Admiral Chris Barrie (Retd), Former Chief of the Australia Defence Force.

The country has never had a national climate risk assessment—an extraordinary omission given the escalating frequency and severity of climate-related impacts. Communities, businesses, and governments are left without guidance on how to prepare for or respond to the impacts of climate change.

“This Budget was a chance to deliver what was started—to fund the completion of the National Climate Risk Assessment. Instead, the government has let the moment slip away and the risks are way too big to do that,” said Admiral Chris Barrie (Retd).

The failure to deliver these core commitments doesn't just leave Australia exposed to environmental and economic damage—it also weakens our national security posture. Numerous intelligence assessments have highlighted climate change as having far-reaching consequences for regional stability, food and water security, forced migration, and supply chain resilience. Without a national risk assessment, Australia lacks the foundational intelligence needed to prepare for climate-related security disruptions at home and across the Indo-Pacific.

The lack of a current, whole-of-government risk picture hampers decision-making across critical portfolios—defence, foreign affairs, emergency management, and health—leaving Australia strategically underprepared in an era of accelerating global disruption.

“This isn't just about floods or fires—this is about geopolitical risk, supply chain fragility, and community resilience,” said Cherly Durrant, former Director of Preparedness & Mobilisation, Australian Department of Defence. “You cannot develop a credible plan to deal with the challenges of climate security without a deep understanding of the threats. And right now, Australia is working without that key intelligence.”

A completed National Climate Risk Assessment must be the basis for a whole-of-government strategy to prevent, mitigate, and prepare for climate threats—domestic and regional. The next term of Parliament must prioritise this foundational work and ensure that effective planning is integrated into security, economic resilience, and disaster preparedness frameworks. The longer Australia delays, the greater the risks—and the harder it becomes to protect people, communities, and our strategic interests.

The Federal Opposition has also failed to outline any plans in its budget reply to fund or progress a national climate risk assessment. At a time when leadership is essential, this lack of commitment leaves Australia's security highly vulnerable in the face of a growing threat—further delaying the work needed to secure the nation.

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