

Hello Senators,

I live an hour and a half outside a major metropolitan city with my partner in a town of approximately 3000 that has forest surrounding it on all sides. This summer we have had close calls with extreme weather causing fire danger and on two occasions, we have implemented our fire plan twice and on one of these days a fire came within 10km of our home (our fire plan is to leave).

I worry for the 96 year old lady who lives alone next door to me. She is deaf, so cannot listen to the radio for alerts, and does not use a mobile phone to receive the warning text messages. Her sons live outside of town and if there was to be a fire nearby, it would be myself and my neighbours advising her to leave her home. Or taking her to a safe place.

I work part time at the local hospital here in town, as a nurse. Already I have seen a number of the elderly present to our emergency department with heat stroke and dehydration from the hotter weather. I have also recently looked after a fire fighting volunteer suffering from extreme exhaustion. With inaction, I can only see these sorts of presentations becoming more frequent. Can our health care system cope with the greater influx? What is the governments duty of care in relation to health in hotter weather?

I also run a small business of floristry and climate change will directly affect the viability of my business. I buy my flowers from local flower farms and with climate change trends indicating a hotter predicted climate, I can see that these farmers will have to use much more water to sustain their practices of growing their chosen crops and in some cases, withdraw from growing some flowers altogether. This will be a big blow to the farmers of my area, but it also has a flow on effect to whole industries (cut flowers, nursery, wedding, event and hospitality). I have already started to change my practices to using dry climate flowers in arrangements, but with more extreme weather events I am not sure that even those flowers will be available.

When envisioning a future scenario of rampant climate change, the only consolation I have in losing my floristry business is that I will have more nursing work available to me. This is a terrible thought indeed and this is not the future that I want to see for myself or my local community.

Kind regards,
Sarah Corfe