

I wish to express my growing concern over climate change. My point of view is simply as an average citizen watching with concern the events around me that show me, in my local environment, that something serious is happening and at alarming speed. I live in Perth and our experience is one of a definite change in weather - our summers used to be hot but dry with one or two weeks around early February of extreme heat. Autumn arrived in early March. Since the 1990's and with increasing frequency we are experiencing humid conditions, our extreme heat episodes are increasing and we don't cool down now until well into April. Strange weather patterns that we never used to be seen are becoming more frequent and these changes seem to be gathering momentum, happening more and more often. All this seems to be becoming the new norm. Everyone talks about these changes, they are our direct experience, very much "in our faces" and no one denies that they are happening.

I feel concern for our city with its rapidly expanding population - how will the summer demand for increased power and water for air conditioners be met? How will demand for water for those who feel they need to keep their gardens alive through extreme heat be met? How will the aged, ill, impoverished and needy who do not have air conditioning manage through these terribly demanding conditions? What about our habit of expanding horizontally, clearing trees and bush needed as carbon sinks, where is the planning to change the way we house ourselves to absorb less land? And in all this there is the need for solutions in the context of lower greenhouse emissions.

How will our farmers grow our food in these extreme heat and storm conditions that we are seeing, particularly as they seem to be happening more and more often? We've already seen some of next year's crops wiped out in our latest blow. In our state's South West water tables are alarmingly low, last year in some areas farmers came extremely close to running out of underground water supplies and little planning or action at government level seems to be evident.

Extreme heat conditions increase our risk of bushfires to an alarming level. 20 years ago a bushfire near Perth was a rarity and almost unheard of near housing. Not any more. Anyone living in the semi rural suburbs of Perth knows that now each summer carries the risk of fires and yet we continue to rely on a largely volunteer brigade of firefighters. If we are likely to have more devastating fires where is the government investment in professional firefighters to protect lives and property?

The responsibility to act in the interests of the next generations is enormous. Our scientists have been warning us about what is happening but I do not see anything like the political will to make the scope of changes necessary in evidence in our mainstream politicians, which is most alarming.

I do see a change in the average person's perceptions however - our direct experience of living with extreme events is forcing us to notice that things are changing and attitudes, awareness and concern at the grass roots level is increasing rapidly, whether or not our politicians are too removed from reality to notice.

Sincerely

Jill Haynes