

Additional Comments from the Australian Greens

1.1 The Greens acknowledge the extensive work of the Committee in its inquiry into the implications of climate change for Australia's national security. We thank the Committee and the Secretariat for its high-quality work, and welcome the recommendations in the report.

1.2 This inquiry has highlighted the crystal-clear threat of climate change. As the Climate Council stated in its submission to the inquiry "climate change poses a significant and growing threat to human and societal well-being, threatening food, water, health and national security".¹ Many submitters and witnesses made reference to the current and existential national security risk that climate change presents, including Mr Mark Crossweller, Director-General of Emergency Management Australia.²

1.3 In its submission, the Department of Defence was one of many witnesses to state that climate change is a "threat multiplier".³ Defence noted that climate change has helped to exacerbate many of the current conflicts in the Middle East, including Syria, and has contributed to the current emerging refugee crisis in Africa.

1.4 This inquiry has also shown that climate denial is a threat to national security. It is overwhelmingly evident that mitigation is the most important task in reducing the security risks posed by climate change. As Oxfam noted in its submission:

...we cannot afford to focus on response at the expense of prevention...To protect communities, governments must act rapidly to mitigate the worst effects by limiting warming to 1.5°C, whilst helping communities and countries around the world adapt to the impacts we can no longer avoid.⁴

1.5 Yet some members of our current Parliament remain intent on blocking any action to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, such that Australia's emissions continue to increase annually.

1.6 At the same time, successive Coalition and Labor Governments have overseen drastic cuts to Australia's aid budget. This directly contravenes evidence heard during the inquiry, calling for Australian leadership in supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts through its international aid program.

1.7 Furthermore, successive cuts to government funding of climate science and research stands in stark contrast to recommendations from submitters and witnesses that it is in Australia's security interests to increase the capacity of our climate research institutions. These cuts have been exacerbated by continued political attacks on the validity of climate science. A clear statement of support regarding the

1 *Submission 18*, p. 4.

2 *Committee Hansard*, 20 March 2018, p. 7.

3 *Submission 63*, p. 3.

4 *Submission 40*, p. 2.

importance of climate science, backed up by increased and sustained Government funding, is critical.

1.8 The Australian Greens welcome the fact that this inquiry has broken new ground in recognising and understanding the severe security risks posed by climate change. We note that many of the submissions contained compelling recommendations to address climate and security challenges. We hope that these suggestions will be further explored in a Climate Security White Paper (Recommendation 2 of the Chair's report). The Australian Greens have four additional recommendations that are, in our view, fundamental to addressing the climate and security challenge.

Recommendation 1

1.9 Phase-out greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the Australian economy by 2040 at the latest, including ensuring that Australia reaches the target of 100% renewable energy by 2030.

Recommendation 2

1.10 Plan and upgrade the ADF's role and capabilities to provide equal priority to humanitarian, disaster relief and peacekeeping missions, alongside its warfighting functions.

Recommendation 3

1.11 Provide at least \$3.2 billion in climate finance funding each year by 2020, in addition to the existing aid budget, so that developing nations, particularly those in our own vulnerable region, can build climate resilience.

Recommendation 4

1.12 Increase funding to the CSIRO climate program and other climate science programs and institutions, along with assurances around funding stability, so that Australia can better understand the threats posed by climate change.

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

The Australian Greens