

The following is a submission to the Senate Committee on "Recent trends in and preparedness for extreme weather events." I am making this submission as an individual with an interest in the impacts of disasters and climate change. The intention of this submission is to briefly comment on some of the terms of reference to suggest issues that the committee should further investigate.

(d) an assessment of the preparedness and the adequacy of resources in the emergency services sector to prevent and respond to extreme weather events;

There needs to be a thorough assessment of the impact that extreme weather events have on the capacity of emergency services. For example, in Victoria the SES is responsible for managing storm and flood events but its capacity to manage these events is often stretched. The fire services can provide additional capacity to assist the SES in responding to these events. There is a need for greater integration of these emergency services so that resources can be better utilised and to boost the surge capacity of the emergency services.

(e) the current roles and effectiveness of the division of responsibilities between different levels of government (federal, state and local) to manage extreme weather events;

During the heatwave event of January 2013 I don't believe enough attention was paid to the public health impacts of extreme heat. While authorities issue very clear warnings about fire danger and it is clear to the public which authorities are responsible for managing fires, the same cannot be said for managing the health impacts of extreme heat. The agencies responsible for managing the public health impacts of extreme heat need to be more clearly identified and have a clear strategy for issuing public warnings and implementing measures to mitigate public health risks associated with extreme heat.

Submission written by David Reid