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Australian Academy of Science submission on the Senate Inquiry into the Disaster Ready Fund Bill 2022

The Australian Academy of Science welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration's Inquiry into the *Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022*.

The Academy:

- Supports a focus on funding for disaster resilience
- Recommends a robust and transparent governance framework for resilience funding
- Suggests that new strategies for adaptation are urgently needed, that are not as technology and discipline focused as at present

[Disaster resilience funding is critical for Australia, especially due to increasing climate risk](#)

The Academy is broadly supportive of measures to increase funding towards disaster resilience. As outlined in the recent Academy report, *The risks to Australia of a 3°C warmer world*, Australia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming, particularly through disasters or extreme weather events. Events such as heatwaves, bushfires and cyclones are a natural feature of Earth's climate system, but there is strong evidence that many of these events have become more frequent and intense in recent years. The risk posed by such events is likely to escalate as global temperatures continue rising and Australian capacity to respond is further strained.¹ As such, the Academy supports the Bill's intention to increase the amount of Australian Government payments that aim to bolster proactively Australia's disaster resilience.

[The awarding of resilience funding should be robustly governed](#)

This Bill represents an opportunity for the Australian Government to reform how Australia plans and governs disaster resilience and adaptation to climate change, given the increasing evidence that anthropogenic climate change will increase Australia's disaster risk in the future—and the likely need for increased disaster resilience and adaptation funding.

A gap in the Bill is the absence of a transparent and appropriate framework for deciding the prioritisation of funding. Prioritisation should consider the complexities and limits of forecasting disasters, issues of moral hazard, metrics of 'fair value', and social equity.² Further, there should be a commitment to drawing upon the evidence base to help inform prioritisation, scientific and otherwise.

[Australia's current strategies for adaptation to climate change, including disasters remains technology and discipline focused](#)

The recent publication of the *National Strategy for Just Adaptation* can help inform these issues. The *Strategy* was published by the Academy, through Future Earth Australia, a partnership of Australian universities, research institutes and industry, government and civil society working to advance sustainability. The *Strategy* emphasises the need for longer-term planning through reimagining high-level concepts and societal constructs that need to change to decrease outcomes of inequity and marginalisation within Australia. There is good evidence that achieving more just outcomes, in the long run, reduces the costs of adaptation to government and delivers many co-benefits relating to a healthier and more resilient society.³

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Mr Chris Anderson, Director Science Policy at

¹ Australian Academy of Science, *The risks to Australia of a 3°C warmer world* (Canberra: Australian Academy of Science, March 2021): 31-35, <https://www.science.org.au/files/userfiles/support/reports-and-plans/2021/risks-australia-three-deg-warmer-world-report.pdf>

² Tessa Satherley, 'Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022', Bills Digest No. 15, 2022-23 (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 2022): 13-15, 20-22, https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/billsdgs/8791340/upload_binary/8791340.pdf;fileType=application/pdf

³ Future Earth Australia, *A National Strategy for Just Adaptation* (Canberra: Australian Academy of Science, 2022), <https://www.futureearth.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/a-national-strategy-for-just-adaptation.pdf>