

Additional Comments by Coalition Senators

Report and findings

1.1 Coalition Senators agree with much of the body of the report relating to evidence on strategic and long-term risks to Australia's national security and the role of humanitarian and military personnel in responding to the impact of climate on our security and strategic environment.

1.2 However, Coalition Senators note that the terms of reference for this inquiry have been applied liberally to focus on broader policy matters related to international climate agreements and obligations. Additionally, the committee has also focussed on and recommended defence establish internal emissions reduction targets, also outside of the spirit of this inquiry.

1.3 Commonwealth agencies with an interest in the impact of climate change on Australia's national security environment provided information to the inquiry on the role of climate change in their strategic considerations.

1.4 The Department of Defence outlined in their submission to the inquiry that:

Direct climate impacts – such as the change in the frequency of extreme weather events, increase in the number of hot days and sea-level rise – can affect Defence bases, operations, capability and personnel. These impacts are relatively well understood and are largely being addressed in concert with other government agencies, allies and industry partners. Climate change is also increasing the demand for Australian Defence Force (ADF) to conduct humanitarian operations both domestically and overseas.¹

1.5 Furthermore, the Department said:

Defence is progressively embedding climate change in its core business functions. Defence now considers the impact of climate change in its policy setting, planning, operations, preparedness capability life cycle management and estate and environmental management.²

1.6 Similarly, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade submitted:

Successive Australian governments have recognised these threats and risks. Australia's national security agencies have well-defined responsibilities and capacities to respond...

DFAT works as part of a whole-of-government effort to address and manage the risks to security from climate change. Of particular importance is the Department's leadership on strengthening international cooperation and action against climate change, including participation in forums and agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

1 *Submission 63*, p. 3.

2 *Submission 63*, pp. 3–4.

Change, the 2015 Paris Agreement, the Platform on Disaster Displacement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.³

1.7 Mr Mark Crossweller, Director General of Emergency Management Australia, the Department of Home Affairs, confirmed the Department is leading a whole of Government approach to address the future impacts of natural hazards; this includes the effects of climate change. In the hearing on March 20, 2018, Mr Crossweller stated:

The department is taking the lead role across the Commonwealth to address the future impacts of natural hazards. With the Department of the Environment and Energy, we co-chair the Australian government Disaster and Climate Resilience Reference Group to embed disaster and climate resilience in Australian government policies and programs. This group has representatives from every Australian government department. The group is deepening understanding of the current and future impacts of climate change and provides a forum for sharing experiences of how we can respond through engagement with the Commonwealth's expert science and research organisations in the private sector.⁴

1.8 Coalition Senators believe the Government and stakeholder departments have sufficient strategies in place to ensure Australia's response to the implications of climate change on national security is well understood and consistent across the whole of Government. As such, we provide the below response to the recommendations contained in the report.

Response to recommendations

1.9 In response to recommendations 2 and 3, Coalition Senators believe the 2016 Defence White Paper and the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, along with the whole of Government approach outlined by the Department of Home Affairs sufficiently recognise the importance of climate change in strategic considerations. Evidence provided to the committee demonstrates climate change and related regional implications are already part of strategic and national security considerations.

1.10 Coalition Senators agree with recommendation 4 so far as the release of the work would benefit other Commonwealth departments in their preparedness and planning. Coalition Senators also note the importance of the Commonwealth Government's Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Program and associated operational support by the Australian Defence Force to combatting many of the issues related to climate change in the Pacific. Australia's Defence Cooperation Agreements are also critical in this context. Defence should deploy to support HADR where civilian capacity is limited or exceeded. Funding models should also be explored in a similar manner to that which enables augmentation of national firefighting capability.

1.11 In response to recommendation 6, Coalition Senators note the leadership role the Department of Home Affairs have taken in ensuring a whole of Government response to climate change and resilience, through the Director General of Emergency

3 *Submission 61*, pp. 2–3.

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

Management Australia. Climate change is a whole of society risk and should be normalised across all departments, there is no need for a dedicated leadership position, current arrangements are sufficient.

1.12 In response to recommendation 7, Coalition Senators acknowledge the steps Defence have taken in recognising the role climate effects play in forward and strategic planning, particularly in projecting the potential for increased HADR deployments. Advice from Defence that a Defence Climate and Security Advisor has been appointed is welcome and sufficient:

The embedding process was supported initially by a Global Change and Energy Security Initiative established in 2013 and in 2016, and since mid-2016 by the appointment of a Defence Climate and Security Adviser. These initiatives have focussed on building climate change awareness throughout Defence and across government, and supporting adoptions of climate change considerations into business as usual.⁵

1.13 In their submission, Defence further noted that:

The 2016 Integrated Investment Program states that Defence will implement a comprehensive program of investment aimed at continuously developing, monitoring and maintaining critical infrastructure, ADF bases and logistics systems such as fuel facilities. Energy, including electricity and fuel, is a key enabler of ADF operations, supporting both force projection (through bases) and military capabilities.⁶

1.14 In response to recommendation 8, Coalition Senators support staff in relevant departments such as the Department of Home Affairs, Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade becoming more familiar with the impact of climate effects on national security.

1.15 Coalition Senators support the principle of recommendation 10 and the Department of Defence's continued use of and exploration of alternative energy sources for defence installations.

1.16 In response to recommendation 10, Coalition Senators do not support internal emissions reductions targets for Defence, however note the successful exploration of alternative energy sources such as utilising wave energy at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia – alternative energy sources should be pursued where practical and where operational concerns and demands permit. In their submission, Defence noted the potential for further exploration of alternative energy sources:

While changes in energy market dynamics and energy sources will in the short-term require strategic thinking to ensure security of Defence liquid fuel supplies, in the medium-long term they may provide new energy conversion technology, energy sources and mobile processing that could provide Defence ways to reduce its energy footprint, increase energy productivity (and thereby capability return on investment), and the

5 *Submission 63*, p. 4.

6 *Submission 63*, p. 7.

capability to produce its own power and fuel on demand wherever it is and whatever it is doing, freeing it from limiting logistic chains. Further innovation examples are provided below in “Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Actions in Defence”.⁷

1.17 Coalition Senators believe fuel security for Defence operations is an ongoing concern, in their submission Defence stated:

Continued access and supply of energy is critical for Defence missions. Energy supply, particularly fuel, is provided through a transforming global market and Defence will be reliant on the national and international support base for the foreseeable future.⁸

1.18 Whilst Defence have been successfully exploring alternative energy sources for base operations, Coalition Senators recommend Defence continue to review and implement measures to reduce reliance on external energy sources both in terms of fuel security for operations and utilities for bases and domestic installations. Defence will be a key stakeholder in the inquiry into liquid fuel security recently announced by Minister Frydenberg which should consider, among other factors, the role for alternative energy sources such as biofuels (whether drop-in or replacement).

1.19 In response to recommendation 11, Coalition Senators recognise the Foreign Policy White Paper reinforces the importance of our official development of our Overseas Development Assistance as a powerful tool to encourage sustainable development and reduce poverty in our region, leading to stability, security and prosperity, which for Australia is second only to the defence of Australia.

1.20 Coalition Senators note the Commonwealth Government currently spends \$4 billion on our Overseas Development Aid program with 90 per cent allocated to the Indo-Pacific. Concerning the impact of climate change, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade noted in their submission that:

DFAT is active in a range of regional forums, such as the East Asia Summit and Pacific Islands Forum. Globally, DFAT engages in the G20 and its strong sustainable development, climate and energy action agenda. Through our network of bilateral relationships, we are strengthening political and practical cooperation to mitigate climate change risks...

DFAT is integrating climate action and disaster resilience across the entire Australian Aid Program, as well as implementing the Prime Minister’s commitment to invest AUD 1 billion over five years in climate resilience and emission reduction measures in developing countries, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific. DFAT works bilaterally, regionally and with multilateral banks and funds. DFAT’s longstanding partnerships with Australian and international non-government organisations (NGOs) are key.⁹

7 *Submission 63*, p. 8.

8 *Submission 63*, p. 7.

9 *Submission 61*, p. 3.

1.21 The stability and security of our region is second only to the defence of Australia and so stability, security and prosperity are the drivers of our overseas development assistance in the Pacific and a very important component of this is food security and effective fisheries coastal management plays a vital role in ensuring this.

1.22 Coalition Senators note the Commonwealth is integrating climate change and disaster considerations into all Australia's overseas development assistance investments across the Pacific through improved research and a focus on resilience and risk reduction.

1.23 This support is in line with the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, which is a great example of regional coordination- with SPC, a lead author alongside SPREP, the University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and UN agencies.

1.24 Coalition Senators believe states and territories should consider strategies contributing specialist resources to offshore emergencies, including those generated by climate change.

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