



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture,  
Water and the Environment**

Mr Ted O'Brien MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy  
PO Box 6021 Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr O'Brien

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy's inquiry into the *Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020*.

The Bill sets out a proposed framework for the development of national climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, including monitoring and reporting on progress.

Following the Machinery of Government changes announced in December 2019 (effective from 1 February 2020), responsibilities for climate change policy are shared between three ministers as follows:

- Minister for the Environment, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, is responsible for climate science and adaptation policy.
- Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, the Hon Angus Taylor MP, is responsible for climate mitigation and emissions reduction policies, including the national inventory, accounting and projections.
- Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, is responsible for international climate change negotiations.

This submission focuses on the matters for which the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the Department) is responsible.

Below we outline Australia's current climate change adaptation framework, including roles and responsibilities, international obligations, and other matters for consideration by the Committee.

### ***International Climate Adaptation Framework***

Climate change is a global challenge that requires a coordinated response. Australia is committed to playing its part in addressing this challenge, demonstrated by its active role in negotiating and ratifying all United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) treaties.

Climate adaptation is a core pillar of the UNFCCC Cancun Adaptation Framework (2010) and reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement (2015). Practical action on reducing emissions goes hand in hand with practical action on resilience and adaptation to respond to our changing climate.

Under the Paris Agreement, Australia is expected, 'as appropriate,' to:

- engage in adaptation planning and implementation through national adaptation plans, vulnerability assessments, monitoring and evaluation (Article 7).
- build the resilience of socioeconomic and ecological systems, including through economic diversification and sustainable management of natural resources (Article 7).

- communicate plans, actions, and support needs through an Adaptation Communication (Article 7).
- contribute to the global stocktake to assess progress towards achieving commitments under the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals (Article 14).

As part of our requirements under the UNFCCC, Australia submits National Communications (every 4 years) and Biennial Reports (every two years) to the UNFCCC which include details on Australia's climate change policies and measures. These reports are an important aspect of the transparency system under the UNFCCC and undergo technical international review. Australia's seventh National Communication on Climate Change and Fourth Biennial Report were submitted to the UNFCCC in December 2017 and December 2019 respectively.<sup>1</sup> These reports include information on climate adaptation and science. Australia eighth National Communication and Fifth Biennial Report are due to be submitted by 31 December 2022.

As the implementation of the Paris Agreement begins, these UNFCCC reporting requirements will transition to reporting to the Enhanced Transparency Framework under the Paris Agreement. Australia's First Biennial Transparency Report to the Paris Agreement will be submitted by December 2024 and will also include adaptation information.

Australia is categorised as an industrialised country under Annex 1 of the UNFCCC. This means we submit regular reports on Australia's climate change policies and measures. Australia submitted its seventh National Communication on Climate Change Report to the UNFCCC in December 2017.<sup>2</sup> This report is submitted every 4 years and includes chapters on climate adaptation and science. Australia also submitted in December 2020 its first Biennial Communication under the Paris Agreement Article 9.5 and decision 12/CMA.<sup>3</sup> This report summarises projected levels of public financial resources to be provided to developing country Parties, starting in 2020.

### ***Australia's Domestic Climate Adaptation Framework***

#### ***Australian Government***

Australia's climate adaptation framework is guided by the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (the Strategy).<sup>4</sup> The first Strategy was launched at UNFCCC COP21 in Paris, December 2015.

This Strategy:

- brings together key decisions made on climate adaptation.
- provides a set of principles to guide effective adaptation and resilience building.
- highlights decisions made between the Australian and state and territory governments on adaptation, including government roles and responsibilities for adaptation and the national priority areas for action.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government (2017) [Australia's 7<sup>th</sup> National Communication on Climate Change](#); Australian Government (2019) [Australia's Fourth Biennial Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government (2017) [Australia's 7<sup>th</sup> National Communication on Climate Change](#)

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government (2020) [First Biennial Communication](#)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government (2015) [National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy](#)

In climate adaptation, all levels of government, businesses, communities and individuals have complementary but different roles. The Strategy reaffirmed the climate adaptation roles and responsibilities first agreed by COAG in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

In line with these responsibilities, the Australian Government:

- provides access to national climate science and adaptation information to support government, business and communities in managing climate risks.
- manages the climate risks of Australian Government policies, programs and assets.

On 25 January 2021, the Australian Government announced it will develop a new National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy to provide a roadmap towards a more climate resilient Australia.

The new Strategy will:

- include a future vision and roadmap towards successful adaptation in accordance with the Paris Agreement.
- bring together key decisions made on climate adaptation.
- consider the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.
- build on the Government's inaugural 2015 Strategy.
- aim to be finalised by the 26th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Glasgow in November 2021.

This builds on over \$15 billion the Australian Government has committed to make our natural resources, environment and water infrastructure more resilient to drought and climate disasters.

- This figure includes significant investments such as the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, \$3.5 billion for the National Water Grid Authority, \$2 billion for bushfire recovery and \$1.9 billion to increase the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Australian Government undertook a national climate change risk assessment in 2005,<sup>6</sup> followed by a series of sector-based assessments, including:

- Australia's Biodiversity and climate change – A strategic assessment of the vulnerability of Australia's biodiversity to climate change (2013).<sup>7</sup>
- Climate Change risks to coastal buildings and infrastructure – A supplement to the first pass national assessment (2011).<sup>8</sup>
- Climate Change risks to Australia's coasts: a first pass national assessment (2009).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Council of Australian Governments (2012) [Roles and Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation in Australia](#)

<sup>6</sup> Department of the Environment and Heritage (2005) [National Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability: Promoting an Efficient Adaptation Response in Australia](#).

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government (2013) [Australia's biodiversity and climate change – A strategic assessment of the vulnerability of Australia's biodiversity to climate change](#)

<sup>8</sup> Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (2011) [Climate change risks to coastal buildings and infrastructure - A supplement to the first pass national assessment](#)

<sup>9</sup> Department of Climate Change (2009) [Climate Change Risks to Australia's Coasts – A first pass National Assessment](#)

- Implications of Climate Change to Australia's World Heritage Properties (2009).<sup>10</sup>

Australian Government departments and agencies integrate climate and disaster risk management into policies, programs and assets.

- The Australian Government Disaster and the Climate Resilience Reference Group (RRG) provides strategic direction and supports cross-agency collaboration for climate, disaster risk management and relevant issues.
- In 2018, CSIRO and the former Department of Environment and Energy developed a climate risk management framework for Australian Government agencies called *Climate Compass*.<sup>11</sup>

*Climate Compass* provides guidance on identifying and managing climate risks from a strategic and operational level. It includes step-by-step instructions, guidance and information to develop an understanding of climate change risks.

#### *State, Territory and Local Governments*

State and territory governments play a major role in direct adaptation action, primarily through their planning laws and investments in public infrastructure. They also focus on ensuring appropriate regulatory and market frameworks are in place, providing regionally appropriate information and delivering an adaptation response.

All states and territories have adaptation plans and strategies (**Appendix A**). Tasmania and Victoria have a legislative framework guiding their adaptation activities.

State and territory governments have also undertaken assessments of climate risks. Some risk assessments were completed at the regional level for the State (NSW, South Australia and Victoria) while others had a broad multi-sectoral scope (ACT).<sup>12</sup> States and territories have also completed a number of assessments focused on single risks or sectors, including:

- Queensland and Victoria completed heatwave risk assessments with plans to undertake assessments in other sectors.<sup>13</sup>
- Queensland completed a state-wide disaster risk assessment in 2017.<sup>14</sup>
- Western Australia has completed a risk assessment for agriculture.<sup>15</sup>
- Tasmania completed a natural disaster risk assessment in 2012 and 2016.<sup>16</sup>

Local governments manage climate change risks to services, assets and infrastructure they control. They are also well-positioned to inform state and federal governments about the on-the-ground needs of local and regional communities relating to climate adaptation action. Many local

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Climate Change and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (2009) [Implications of Climate Change to Australia's World Heritage Properties](#)

<sup>11</sup> CSIRO and Department of the Environment and Energy (2018) [Climate Compass](#)

<sup>12</sup> South Australia Government (2014) [Regional Integrated vulnerability assessments – 2014-2016](#); New South Wales Government (2010) [NSW Climate Impact Profile](#); Victoria Government (2018) [Regional Climate change adaptation snapshot reports](#)

<sup>13</sup> Queensland Government (2019) [Queensland state heatwave risk assessment](#); Natural Capital Economics (2018). [Heatwaves in Victoria: a vulnerability assessment](#). Report prepared for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, VIC.

<sup>14</sup> Queensland Government (2017) [State Disaster Management Plan](#)

<sup>15</sup> Sudmeyer, R, Edward, A, Fazakerley, V, Simpkin, L & Foster, I (2016) [Climate change: impacts and adaptation for agriculture in Western Australia](#). Report prepared for the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.

<sup>16</sup> Tasmanian Government (2016) [Tasmanian State Natural Disaster Risk Assessment: All Hazard Summary](#)

governments also have adaptation plans. For example in NSW, the Shoalhaven and Hunter and Cantal Coasts rural regions have adaptation plans.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Australian Government's Climate Adaptation Action***

The Australian Government provides national climate science and natural disaster information to support effective climate risk decision-making.

The Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO play an important role in monitoring, analysing and communicating observed changes in Australia's climate.

- The Bureau produces an Annual Climate Statement, summarising the previous year and includes information on temperature, rainfall and significant weather.<sup>18</sup>
- The Bureau and CSIRO jointly produce the biennial State of the Climate report, drawing on the latest monitoring, science and projection information to describe variability and changes in Australia's climate and how it is likely to change in the future.<sup>19</sup>

These agencies' expertise in Southern Hemisphere climate science, as well as other science efforts through the Australian Antarctic Division and Australian universities, benefit the entire globe and particularly our Pacific region. Our world-leading scientific institutions, including the Bureau, CSIRO, academics and scientists contribute to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reporting process as lead authors and major contributors. The Australian Government funds and supports this contribution to IPCC reports and processes.

The Government's "Climate Science for Australia's Future" report was released on 9 December 2019.<sup>20</sup> The report was developed by the National Climate Science Advisory Committee, and recommends actions to coordinate and integrate national climate science activities and investments across agencies and sectors in order to best meet Australia's current and future climate science challenges.

Since the report's release, the Department has begun implementing the recommendations, preparing reports on climate process research, the capabilities required for provision of a national climate services capability and the scoping of components for the next generation of national climate projections.

- The Department is in the process of establishing the Climate Science Advisory Group (the Group), in response to one of the recommendations of "Climate Science for Australia's Future".<sup>20</sup>
- Membership will include relevant technical skills, experience and stakeholder representation.
- The Group will broaden engagement and provide advice to coordinate the large body of climate science research currently under way in Australia.

Examples of Australian Government investments in climate science and adaptation research and services include:

- Significant investments to ensure the Bureau continues to provide the Australian community with reliable, secure and ongoing access to weather, climate, water and oceans information.

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<sup>17</sup> Shoalhaven City Council (nd) [Shoalhaven Adaptation Plan](#); Hunter Joint Org. (2010) [Rural Councils – Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#)

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Meteorology (2020) [Annual Climate Statement 2020](#)

<sup>19</sup> Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO (2020) [State of the Climate 2020](#)

<sup>20</sup> National Climate Science Advisory Committee (2019) [Climate Science for Australia's Future](#)

- The National Environmental Science Program includes a specialist Climate Systems research hub, which seeks to support decision makers across the Australian community (including Indigenous communities) to build climate resilience.
- \$106 million invested in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science, research and innovation, \$37 million invested in decadal climate forecasting within the CSIRO Climate Science Centre and \$30 million for the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes to research climate extremes and build capacity to predict them.

The Government is in the process of implementing its response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, bringing together Australia's world-leading climate and natural disaster expertise and information to form Climate and Resilience Services Australia.

### ***Australian Government collaboration mechanisms with States, Territories and Local Governments***

The Australian Government collaborates with state and territory governments on climate adaptation through various fora, including the Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM), the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM), the Australian Government Interjurisdictional Working Group (AWG) and Climate Change Task Group (CCTG).

The AWG fosters best practice approaches to adaptation, enabling jurisdictions to collaborate and consult on priority matters of common interest.

The CCTG is progressing the delivery of a coordinated national approach and work program on agriculture and climate change endorsed by Commonwealth and State and Territory Agriculture Ministers. The coordinated national approach will drive collaboration between jurisdictions and ensure the work program builds off the important work already undertaken by governments and the agriculture industry.

### ***Australian Government collaboration in the region and with the international community***

Australia has a strong history of providing climate financing, particularly to countries in our region who are among the most heavily impacted by climate change. Recently, the Prime Minister announced a new global climate finance pledge of at least \$1.5 billion over the period 2021 to 2025, representing a fifty per cent increase on Australia's previous pledge. This new finance figure includes the \$500 million the government pledged last year for climate and disaster resilience in the Pacific and reflects our ongoing commitment to help our Indo-Pacific neighbours respond and adapt to a changing climate.

Australia will continue historical efforts to invest over 70% of Australia's global, regional and bilateral climate finance in support of adaptation and resilience programming and continue our focus on supporting LDCs and SIDS. The Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade has responsibility for climate finance.

Australia supports and leads several international partnerships to protect and preserve natural ecosystems and support global action on climate change. Examples include the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, the Asia-Pacific Rainforest Partnership and the Global Forest Observations Initiative.

Australia has joined the UK's the Call for Action on Raising Ambition for Climate Adaptation and Resilience and the Coalition for Climate Resilience Investment to step-up action on the road to UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Glasgow later this year where Australia will maintain our active and positive contribution to drive global agreement and action.

I appreciate your consideration of the above information and trust it will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Beth Brunoro  
First Assistant Secretary  
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment  
February 2021

**Appendix A:** Overview of state and territory climate adaptation strategy and plans

State	Document name	Year	Overview
ACT	<a href="#">ACT Climate Change Strategy</a>	2019	This strategy replaces the previous Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2 (2012) and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2016) and is complemented by Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan.
QLD	<a href="#">Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy</a>	2017	Pathways to a climate resilient Queensland. The Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy will help Queenslanders prepare for current and future climate changes by understanding the impacts, managing risks and harnessing opportunities.
QLD	<a href="#">Queensland Sector Adaptation Plans</a>	2017-2018	Sector Adaptation Plans are an important component of the Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017–2030. The eight plans help to prioritise climate change adaptation activities across the key sectors of the community. They have been developed in consultation with sector and industry stakeholders to reflect the needs and priorities of each sector.
WA	<a href="#">Western Australian Climate Change Policy</a>	2020	The policy underscores our commitment to adapting to climate change and to working with all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Western Australian Climate Policy outlines the priority themes and practical actions the State Government is taking to enhance climate resilience and support the low carbon transition.
NT	<a href="#">Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050</a>	2020	The Climate Change Response Policy Framework provides the long-term vision required to protect the Territory and capitalise on the economic opportunities. The aim of this framework is to maximise the economic, social and environmental well-being of Territorians while responding proactively to the risks and opportunities of climate change.
SA	<a href="#">Directions for a Climate Smart South Australia</a>	2019	The <i>Directions for a Climate Smart South Australia</i> policy statement sets the government's agenda for practical, on-ground action to address climate related impacts. The directions will guide climate smart planning and action across government to drive low emissions jobs and growth, protect our environment, and support community resilience and wellbeing.
SA	<a href="#">South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021 – 2025</a>	2020	The South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021–2025 describes government-led objectives and actions to help to build a strong, climate smart economy, further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support South Australia to adapt to a changing climate.
NSW	<a href="#">NSW Climate Change Policy Framework</a>	2016	The NSW Climate Change Policy Framework outlines long-term objectives to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and to make New South Wales more resilient to a changing climate.
VIC	<a href="#">Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan</a>	2016	The Adaptation Plan lays out the priorities for the next four years for the Victorian Government to better understand and manage current impacts, and to prepare for the long-term risks of climate change.



TAS	<a href="#">Climate Action 21: Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2017-2021</a>	2017	Climate Action 21: Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2017-2021 sets the Tasmanian Government's agenda for action on climate change. Climate Action 21 is structured into six priorities. Each priority area includes a 2021 vision statement, our actions for 2017 to 2021 and details of initiatives already being progressed by the Tasmanian Government.
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