

I am writing to provide my experience and views on extreme weather events and the changing climate.

I work in the human services sector, which is already stretched to provide the full range of important services to children, young people and their families in Tasmania.

Extreme weather events, and their consequences such as wild bushfires, incur a heavy burden on our service delivery systems – immediately as we respond to emergencies, over time as we provide recovery services to those affected and traumatised by the event, and in the long term as we deal with the consequences of these experiences on the people who have had close contact with the emergency.

It is important that we do all we can to prevent extreme weather events through mitigating climate change. Prevention and early intervention is a fundamental principle in health and human service systems, and in the case of climate change these principles are no different.

I am also concerned at the effects of extreme weather events and consequent disasters on the fabric of our communities. The recent events in Tasmania have contributed to a polarisation of emotions which is now spilling out into social media forums. As caring communities we need to support each other, and the start of this process is to care for our environment.

Human kind has dominated our earth for little more than a few thousand years. An earth that has existed for millions of years is now under threat – and the dominant species is primarily responsible for this. It is time that we, as the most intelligent species on this planet, accept responsibility for our actions and take responsibility for being it's custodians.

Our earth, fire and water our precious. We have it within ourselves to solve these problems with good will, cooperation and determination. Australians are good at all these things. We are capable of leading the world through example, despite our size on the world stage.

I urge the Senate to make a start on this important goal.

Robert Gavin