

PREPARING FOR CLIMATE INDUCED DISASTERS

Our plan to Invest in Critical Infrastructure and Emergency Services

The climate crisis is putting lives at risk right now.

We've seen in the last three years of Parliament how heatwaves, fires and floods are threatening lives and destroying communities. We have built our cities and towns for a climate that is no longer with us. Our public infrastructure is failing.

The Greens will build this critical infrastructure, improve the resilience of homes, and increase funding for emergency services, and we will make big coal and gas corporations pay for it.

This plan will create jobs, keep people safe from the climate crisis, and send the bill to big coal and gas corporations.

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **The total cost of this package will invest \$19.7 billion raised from climate polluting corporations to create 4,700 jobs** to construct the infrastructure and provide the services that will keep communities safe from the impacts of the climate crisis.
- ▲ **Lift Funding** for Emergency Services by \$5 billion over the decade to support equipment and personnel acquisition.
- ▲ Increase natural disaster preparedness funding to \$600 million a year to help local communities build and upgrade critical infrastructure that reduces flood and cyclone impacts.
- ▲ Fund \$7.8 billion of renovation and home building grants over the decade to make sure homes are resilient against floods and cyclones.
- ▲ Investigate a procurement strategy for a nationally managed stock of specialised natural disaster response equipment for States and Territories to access.
- ▲ **Give people the right to be compensated** by the big coal, oil and gas corporations.

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

Keeping communities safe will be paid for by making the coal and gas exporters pay for the damage they are inflicting on everyone else through a coal export levy and requiring royalties to be paid on gas extracted in Commonwealth waters.

DOUBLE EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING

During natural disasters, we don't just rely heavily on our fire, police and ambulance emergency services. The ABC brings communities lifesaving information and the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO study weather changes and send warnings to give first responders the information they need. And the public service supports those who have lost their homes by securing shelter and financial support.

Yet all of these agencies have had their budgets cut by billions of dollars since the Liberals and Nationals have been in power.

Our plan would restore the public service, and also double the current emergency services funding by providing \$5 billion to the States. This funding will make sure our Emergency Services have the latest equipment and personnel they need to respond to natural disasters exacerbated by global heating.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO DISASTER RESPONSE EQUIPMENT

Despite warnings from former fire chiefs and emergency services leaders that Australia needed to boost its waterbomber capacity, the Government did nothing and we watched as the country burned during the summer of 2019-2020.

In 2020, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements recommended that the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments develop an Australian-based and registered national aerial firefighting capability, to be tasked according to the greatest national need.

The Greens will task the Emergency Management Australia (EMA) with identifying gaps in our aerial firefighting capability and flood response capability – working with the State and Territory Governments, as well as the Australian and New Zealand National Council for fire and emergency services.

This report will be the basis of a procurement strategy to create a national stock of specialised disaster response equipment that

can be accessed by the States and Territories as needed.

Equipment will be managed, maintained and distributed by EMA.

KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE

Eleven dollars are saved for every one dollar spent protecting communities before natural disasters strike.¹ If we keep burning coal, oil and gas, that will create multiple overlapping types of natural disasters from global heating and disaster spending will become out of control.

Our national infrastructure is already failing to cope with a radically changing climate. We have built our cities and towns for a climate that is no longer with us. Our stormwater and sewerage systems can't manage extreme rainfall and flooding. Our coastal infrastructure isn't ready to deal with 1-in-50 year storm surges that will soon occur every single year. Our energy and transport systems are already buckling under heatwaves.

The government established the *Emergency Response Fund* in 2019 to invest in infrastructure to keep communities safe. But the government has prioritised earning investment returns for itself over investing in climate exposed communities.

Since its inception, the Fund has earned the government \$836m dollars,² yet it has only spent \$210m on disaster recovery and just \$100m on mitigation infrastructure,³ leaving

¹ <https://www.themandarin.com.au/142557-apra-executive-calls-for-australia-to-increase-investment-in-natural-disaster-mitigation/>

² <https://www.finance.gov.au/emergency-response-fund>

³ <https://recovery.gov.au/emergency-response-fund>

communities like Lismore and Ballina exposed while the government pockets the difference.

The Greens will change these investment restrictions so that \$600m is spent per year until 2026-27, and \$300m per year from 2027-28 on public infrastructure mitigation works.

This funding will allow communities to undertake much needed infrastructure upgrades that reduce the devastating impacts of the climate crisis.

Our plan will also push down the cost of insurance premiums as smart public infrastructure reduces the risk faced by properties exposed to specific types of natural disasters. Without taking this action, insurance will become unaffordable for many people according to Australia's regulator of insurance companies, APRA.⁴

RESILIENT HOMES

So long as we keep burning coal and gas, the climate disasters we've seen over the last three years will keep increasing in frequency and severity.

The climate crisis is exposing a greater number of households to severe weather, and rising insurance prices.

The Greens will establish a separate program to retrofit homes in Australia to be cyclone and flood resilient in high flood or cyclone risk areas. One-off grants of up to \$20,000 will be provided

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<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/02/climate-change-could-put-insurance-out-of-reach-for-many-australians>

to households to undertake cyclone and flood mitigation works, like battening and house raising.

Similar programs in Queensland have seen insurance premiums reduced by an average of 8.6%, saving people money and keeping them safe.⁵

FIRST NATIONS LAND MANAGEMENT

First Nations ranger programs support First Nations people to use their science, knowledge and culture to care for and manage Country as they have done for thousands of years.

The Bushfire Royal Commission recognised the importance of First Nations land management, making two recommendations for Governments to work with Traditional Owners to explore the relationship between First Nations people and fire management and natural disaster resilience.

The Greens will invest almost \$3.2 million over ten years in expanding the rangers program and employ more First Nations people to protect their lands, waters, rivers, lakes and the animals and plants that rely on them.

The Greens will also expand First Nations-led cultural burning programs to ensure First Nations people are involved in fuel and hazard reduction on Country which enhances the health of the land and its people.

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https://www.chde.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/6242/flyerhouseholdresilienceprogram.pdf

MAKE BIG POLLUTERS PAY

The Greens have introduced legislation into Parliament that would give people who have lost their homes or loved ones from natural disasters the chance to sue and seek compensation from the coal, oil and gas companies profiting from climate damage.