

Monday 15 September 2025

Workers to be hit hardest by climate crisis, new report confirms

The first-ever National Climate Risk Assessment (NCRA) confirms the severe cost and danger for Australian workers if emissions aren't brought down rapidly.

On our current emissions trajectory, Australia is forecast to experience a 444 per cent increase in heat-related mortality in Sydney and coastal flooding is set to spike from 15 to 257 days per year, with 3 million people living in coastal communities at risk.

Labour productivity could decrease 0.8 per cent, and up to 2.7 million additional days of work could be lost, with devastating consequences for real wages and national income growth. Property damage is projected to increase to almost \$1 trillion per year by 2090.

The NCRA affirms "climate change is expected to drive escalating economic costs across all communities." It further acknowledges that "there remains an adaptation action shortfall in every system, risk category, jurisdiction, and region across Australia."

Unions stand ready to assist the Commonwealth government in urgently addressing this shortfall, to protect Australians from climate disaster at home, at work, and in their communities. Climate adaptation investments can also be a significant driver of job growth across various sectors, including healthcare, firefighting, and local public services.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"Australia's first-ever National Climate Risk Assessment confirms that climate change is an emergency for workers and their families. We now have a clearer picture than ever of the truly devastating consequences that will result if we do not act with urgency.

"The report reinforces the need for an ambitious 2035 emissions target. Reducing emissions in line with the science is the only way to keep temperatures manageable for all workers and their communities.

"The report further highlights the importance of implementing Future Made in Australia, so we can decarbonise our exports and create hundreds of thousands of jobs. There are also calls for a historic increase in government policy and investment support for adaptation and resilience.

"Later this year, the ACTU, working alongside the Renew Australia for All alliance, will launch a package of reforms aimed at keeping Australians safe as temperatures rise, including increase adaptation funding for local council areas and community organisation, updates to workplace health and safety regulations, policy changes to support more resilient housing including for renters, and increased support for health and social services - the most climate-vulnerable system according to the NCRA.

"The Government can fund these reforms in part by clawing back the billions of dollars Australian taxpayers fork over to giant coal and gas companies every year in the form of the Petroleum Rent Resource Tax and the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme. It's time that money went toward Australians' safety and security, not incentivising more climate pollution."

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