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Climate Safety Plan would support more than 90,000 new jobs annually

Australian Unions are urging the Albanese Government to adopt a new Climate Safety Plan to boost Australia's resilience to worsening climate change.

The Climate Safety Plan is a broad package of measures spanning housing, health and emergency services and would drive the creation of more than 90,000 new jobs annually over the next decade.

Central to the plan is a new National Emergency Response Brigade to provide surge capacity during natural disasters, workplace safety regulations for extreme heat, and an upgraded National Construction Code so new home builds are safe and suited to the changing climate conditions.

The Plan also includes measures to climate-proof schools and aged care centres, expand home energy upgrades for renters, and strengthen the adaptive capacity of the nation's health services, local councils, and the farm sector.

A report from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) released today by Australian Unions shows that adopting the Climate Safety Plan would create more than 90,000 new jobs annually over the next decade.

The report was prepared for the ACTU and Renew Australia, an alliance of more than 80 union, social service, environmental, and clean industry organisations advocating for targeted climate adaptation investments.

The UTS analysis found that implementing the Climate Safety Plan would create an average of 93,000 new jobs annually over the 10-year period of the plan.

This includes 42,500 direct jobs and 50,600 indirect jobs across various supply chains.

Around 95% of the new jobs would be in construction services, or around 3% of the size of the current construction workforce.

The new jobs would be widely distributed throughout regional areas because of the localised nature of the adaptation measures and would deliver strong positive economic returns. The Insurance Council of Australia estimates that every dollar invested in adaptation, saves around nine dollars of avoided costs from natural disasters.

Without significantly increased investment in proactive climate adaptation, the report found that climate change could slash Australian GDP between 3.6% to 14% by 2050.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary, Liam O'Brien:

"All Australian workers are affected by climate change, and it's getting worse. But as a country we face a large gap in investment and policy commitments at the national level needed to keep people safe amid rising temperatures.

"Now we know: if we invest in climate adaptation at scale, not only will we be protecting Australian workers and communities, we'll be driving a massive jobs program, with the potential to create tens of thousands of good new jobs.

“The Australian Government’s own National Climate Risk Assessment warns that it is now prudent to plan for a scenario where heat deaths in Sydney will spike 444%, where 1.5 million Australians will be exposed to coastal flooding, and where we’ll see up to 45 days every year where it’ll be too hot to safely perform outdoor manual labour.

“That Assessment found we lag behind in preparing for the heat waves, coastal flooding and extreme weather events that are happening more often and in places once considered safe. Extreme heat driven by climate change is already taking the lives of 980 Australians every year.

“Without sustained investment in climate adaptation, the economic costs of climate change will be experienced through inflated grocery prices, higher insurance premiums, damage to homes, infrastructure and farms, lost working hours due to heat—all of it producing a growing drain on government budgets.

“The balance of public funding needs to shift from reactive disaster response to proactive investments in adaptation to avoid spiralling economic loss and realise the productivity gains.

“If implemented, the Climate Safety Plan would see significant investment in climate adaptation each year through to 2035. If we don’t move quickly to invest in adaptation at scale, climate change is going to deliver a body blow to our way of life—not to mention our national budget.”

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