

CLIMATE CHANGE

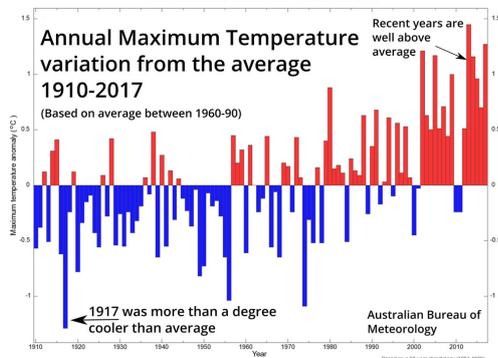
Valuing the climate above burgers

The lack of *science-based* climate policies in all Australian political parties, including the Greens, is a national and international scandal. A science-based policy considers the impacts of various activities and sets policies accordingly. It doesn't prioritise a cattle and BBQ culture ahead of a liveable climate.

Background

A 2010 book, *Merchants of Doubt*,¹ revealed how a few conservative scientists with energy industry funding, worked to confuse the public about our impact on the climate. These people had earlier honed their skills doing exactly the same job for the tobacco companies; confusing the public about whether smoking caused lung cancer.

Three decades after satellites² provided data to verify the climate science, we are now seeing the results of our collective failure to act: a hotter and less stable climate. The satellites confirmed that more energy was arriving at the planet than leaving: by accurately comparing the energy hitting the top and bottom of the satellite. If the first number is higher than the second, then, obviously, the planet will heat up: and it is. Here is some data from Australia:



The Animal Justice Party (AJP) accepts the science and is concerned about the impact of a hotter and less stable climate, with more extreme events, on both human and non-human animals.

A global emergency

Climate change is a global emergency requiring immediate and substantial action across all sectors of society. We

¹<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3675568/>

²<https://science.nasa.gov/missions/erbs>

³<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/307/5716/1766>

⁴<http://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/climate-science-data/climate-science/impacts>

⁵http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/WGIIAR5-TS_FINAL.pdf

⁶Pimm SL. Biodiversity: Climate change or habitat loss—which will kill more species? *Curr Biol.* 2008; 18: 117–119

must act before we cross “tipping points” that will make further climate deterioration unstoppable and irreversible. Even when we stop emitting greenhouse gases, warming will continue for some decades³.

Threats to every aspect of human life

The Australian Government is fully aware of the disastrous impacts of climate change across Australia⁴. The website just referenced suggests that some 85 percent of the our population living along the coast will be impacted by rising seas, storm surges, flooding, heatwaves, and damage to public infrastructure. More residences will be threatened by larger and more frequent bushfires, causing loss of homes and lives. Our ability to respond to these disasters will be jeopardised, as “*the changing frequency, magnitude and distribution of extreme weather may result in natural disasters occurring in new areas and where emergency management experience is limited. Natural disasters could increasingly occur in close succession, limiting the time available for a community to recover between events.*”

Our agricultural yields will be diminished by natural disasters and sustained drought conditions, putting our food security at risk. Water will become more scarce and fresh-water aquifers will become contaminated by seawater. These issues will create social and political problems for future governments as our population struggles to adapt to an unforgiving and unpredictable climate.

Entire ecosystems threatened

Humans and other animals are already suffering from extreme climatic events. A world that becomes 2-4 degrees warmer will kill billions of individual animals with many species going extinct⁵. Research suggests that half of all threatened species in Australia are especially vulnerable to climate change. The negative impacts will be on a scale



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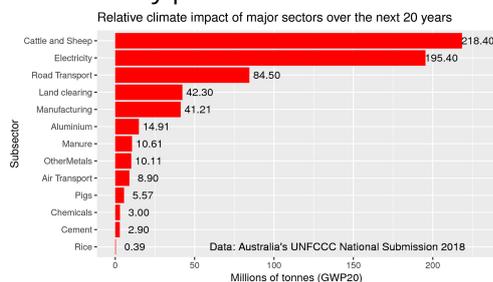
comparable to habitat loss⁶. Shrinking habitat area also increases vulnerability to climate change, exacerbating the problem further. As local conditions change, animals will need to relocate to more suitable habitat or perish. For example, the Mountain Pygmy-possum relies, in both Victoria and NSW, on snowy environments which are under threat from rising temperatures. Their habitat is further degraded and fragmented by encroaching development, including ski resorts.

Animals relying on certain weather conditions, e.g. fire seasons or high moisture levels, are particularly vulnerable as our climate becomes increasingly unpredictable. Amphibians and plants will also require a range of conservation management techniques to help them survive changing climate conditions. Each threatened species will need tailored conservation management plans depending on their unique vulnerabilities. For example, researchers have suggested artificial breeding sites and habitats to climate-proof threatened species. However this is a desperate last resort and is not a viable solution for every threatened species nationwide.

If we allow climate change to continue at the current rate we will most likely see some species become extinct and some ecosystems collapse entirely. Our only hope is to stop it before it is too late.

Climate impacts of food choices

The following chart shows that methane from Australia's 28 million cattle and 70 million sheep will have more impact on the climate in the next 20 years than all of our coal or gas fired electricity power stations combined.



Methane is unusual in being broken down relatively quickly; with 90 percent gone by 20 years. But during that 20 years, a tonne of methane has 105 times⁷ the impact of a tonne of carbon dioxide. Meat and Livestock Australia claim⁸ they will make red meat carbon neutral. Attempts to reduce cattle methane go back at least to the 1980s⁹ and have failed spectacularly to have any significant impacts, so continued claims are disingenuous at best.

Red meat's impacts aren't just due to methane from cattle and sheep, but also to the carbon released by land clearing. To make red meat carbon neutral requires, for starters, reforestation of existing cleared pasture land. That can't happen with existing cattle and sheep populations.

Furthermore, given the high impact of methane and the long life of carbon dioxide, we need to do better than "carbon-neutral" if we are to have any hope in slowing and reversing catastrophic climate change. We must first stop and reverse land clearing. Land clearing rates in Queensland alone have been enough to completely undo the federal government's gains in fighting greenhouse gas emissions¹⁰. As 93 percent of this clearing¹¹ is to create pasture for animal agriculture, the solution seems remarkably clear.

The AJP is the only political party with a science-based climate policy. No other political party has policies which demonstrate a clear understanding of the rapid impact of methane and land clearing on the global climate.

Animal agriculture currently accounts for about one percent of employment. Horticulture already employs more people¹² than the chicken, pig and dairy industries combined. There is ample room for new products and jobs growth in novel plant-based foods.

Climate change policy

The AJP will prioritise urgent action to address climate change. Grazing and associated land clearing is a major cause of climate change. So, in addition to phasing out fossil fuels, we will also have to phase out sheep and cattle farming. This is essential not only to reduce methane emissions, but also to allow reforestation.

Key Objectives

1. To prohibit any fossil fuel expansion and rapidly transform to a carbon-free energy infrastructure.
2. To rapidly transform Australian agriculture to allow reforestation by reducing grazing.
3. Implement a carbon tax on both the fossil fuel and animal agriculture industries.
4. Direct carbon tax income into clean energy solutions, sustainable plant-based food agriculture systems and education.
5. Protect existing forests and marine habitats from further destruction.

⁷<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/326/5953/716>

⁸<https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/red-meat-industry-can-be-carbon-neutral-by-2030/>

⁹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7082625>

¹⁰<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/06/queensland-tree-clearing-wipes-out-federal-emissions-gains>

¹¹<https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/4dbd1416-52b7-467a-8410-17a70ddf16bf/resource/60a7902d-7a9d-49a7-90b1-a54686fbcef5/download/slatsreport2015-16.pdf>

¹²<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/Documents/agricultural-commodities-report-march-2017.pdf>



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