



THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA

Climate Change

The Issue

Australia's climate has warmed since records started to be kept in 1910.¹ This is because of the greenhouse effect, where the level of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere act as a blanket, trapping in heat.² The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that this has been caused by human activities.³ Changes in our climate have led to:

- More frequent and intense extreme weather events like floods, heatwaves and bushfires
- Changes to rainfall patterns
- Rising sea temperature and levels
- More hot days and less cold days
- Coral bleaching⁴

Climate change impacts go beyond the environmental impacts. Climate change will have strong impacts on physical and mental health, including those resulting from lack of access to clean water and sanitation, changes to spread in diseases, increased natural disasters, and poverty.

We are already experiencing this in Australia with disaster trends being complex, compounding and cascading, and it is expected to get worse.⁵ For example, there has been an increase in extreme fire weather and a longer fire season across large parts of

¹ Climate CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. (2022). State of the Climate 2022. [Link](#)

² Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (n.d.). Understanding climate change. DCCEEW. [Link](#)

³ IPCC. (2023). Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34. [Link](#)

⁴ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (n.d.). Understanding climate change. DCCEEW. [Link](#). CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. (2022). State of the Climate 2022. [Link](#)

⁵ IPCC. (2023). Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34. [Link](#)



Australia since the 1950s.⁶ Climate change responses must include lowering emissions and helping our community adapt to a changing climate.

The impact of climate change on the lives of Australians is significant, with a Climate Council survey finding that 84% of respondents had been directly affected by at least one climate-fuelled disaster since 2019. 84% also reported being worried that their home insurance may become unaffordable due to worsening disasters.⁷ The significant cost to Australians is evident in the estimation that the extreme weather events that happened between September 2021 and September 2022 cost every Australian household an average of \$1532.⁸ Unfortunately, people already experiencing disadvantage are more likely to be impacted negatively both by climate change and by measures to adapt. They typically have fewer resources to reduce the personal impact of climate change (such as installing solar panels or moving to a safer region) and to recover from it (such as rebuilding after a flood or fire). This means that addressing climate change is not just an environmental or economic imperative - it is a social justice priority.

How can I get involved?

- [Commit to one change to reduce your individual greenhouse gas footprint.](#) This could look like eating more sustainable and healthy meals once a week, reducing your food waste, catching public transport, cycling or walking instead of driving, or changing the energy sources you rely on.
- [Support local](#) food growers and producers, reclaim green spaces, or grow the local circular economy.
- [Call on our government representatives](#) to commit to deep, rapid and sustained reductions in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions before 2030, and net zero carbon dioxide emissions by the early 2050's. We can also urge them to fund and create policies that encourage widespread investment in renewable energy, energy conservation and efficiency, and reduction of transport emissions.
- Make an intentional effort to [learn](#) about the impacts of climate change and how small changes can make a big difference.

For more information...

- [Goal 13 - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [The Salvation Army Australia's Social Justice Stocktake](#)
- [CSIRO - State of the Climate](#)

⁶ CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. (2022). State of the Climate 2022. [Link](#)

⁷ Climate Council. (2024). Survey results: Climate-fuelled disasters cause Australians to fear permanent loss of homes. [Link](#)

⁸ Lefebvre, M., & Reinhard, J. (2022). The Cost of Extreme Weather: Building Resilience in the face of disaster. The McKell Institute. [Link](#)