



Submission to the Inquiry on the *Implications of
climate change for Australia's national security*

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Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, families, and communities.

Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where it has the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Jesuit Social Services values all persons and seeks to engage with them in a respectful way, that acknowledges their experiences and skills and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential.

We do this by working directly to address disadvantage and by influencing hearts and minds for social change. We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- **Effective services** – by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- **Education** – by providing access to life-long learning and development
- **Capacity building** – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- **Advocacy** – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research
- **Leadership development** – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice.

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by suicide, trauma and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community. Our work to build a just society addresses both social justice and environmental justice issues – together we term this ecological justice.

Jesuit Social Services acknowledges the traditional custodians of land and pays respect to their elders past and present.

Background to submission

In 2008, a key recommendation of the international meeting of the Jesuits' governing body (General Congregation 35 of the Society for Jesus) was for all Jesuits and partners in mission to respond to ecological or environmental challenges, recognising that climate change was "an issue that challenges the very future of humankind" (Promotio Iustitiae 2011:13).

In response to this challenge, the Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) published 'Healing a Broken World' (Promotio Iustitiae 2011) as the rationale for establishing the Task Force on Jesuit Mission and Ecology (July-November 2010).

As would later be expanded by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, 'Healing a Broken World' included two key challenges that relate directly to the basis for Jesuit Social Services' submission to this Senate Inquiry into Climate and Security:

1. That it is, and will continue to be, the poor and most marginalised who are the greatest victims of the ravages of climate change: "The linkage between environment and poverty is unavoidable, and that is the real challenge for all of us" (ibid:19)
2. That politically, we are in a 'climate impasse'. Written following the failure of world leaders at Copenhagen to reach agreement over climate action, *Healing a Broken World* asked the still pertinent question: "How is it that, given the gravity of the data provided by scientists, political leaders were unable to reach an agreement despite the seriousness of the current threat posed by inaction?" (ibid)

A 'climate impasse' has typified climate policy over successive Australian governments. There has been a lack of the bold and strategic action and policies that address the need to transform our society, economy and mechanisms for energy production to the scale and speed necessary to address the existential risk posed by climate change. To this end, the current Inquiry is welcomed as an opportunity to break through this impasse and exercise strong leadership commensurate to the challenges ahead.

Jesuit Social Services recognises the evidence of the risks that climate changes pose for national and human security and the imperative to take immediate action to mitigate these risks. As an organisation, we have for several years sought to bring an ecological perspective to all our operations, recognising that environmental challenges pose significant risk to people on the margins of society whom we work with and support. Acknowledging the interconnection between environmental and social issues has influenced our practice, policy, and organisational identity, and shaped our strategy to ensure we are equipped to address justice issues of the future and that we are also able to lead peer organisations in the community sector around issues of ecological justice. We are developing plans to share our experience and insights with colleagues in the community sector, as we believe the sector not only has powerful reason to invest in this area, but is also uniquely positioned to influence.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's Inquiry into the *Implications of climate change for Australia's national security*. The primary purpose of our submission is to ensure the voice of the most disadvantaged and marginalised within and beyond Australia's borders are considered.

Protecting the most disadvantaged from climate change

Climate impacts on inequality

There is real concern that the impacts of climate change will further exacerbate inequality across Australia and accentuate the rapidly expanding gap between rich and poor. Although the potential

multipliers that could contribute to instability and inequality within Australia are numerous, we briefly note three that influence our cohort:

- the impact of climate change on health
- crime and violence
- cost of living (in particular, the increasing burden of energy pricing).

While these impacts will be felt across the whole of Australian society, greater burden will fall on the marginalised.

Health

The final report of a year-long Commission held jointly between The Lancet and University College London (UCL) Institute for Global Health declared climate change as “the biggest global health threat of the 21st century”.¹ The report outlined the major threats—both direct and indirect—to global health from climate change through changing patterns of disease, water and food insecurity, vulnerable shelter and human settlements, extreme climatic events, and population growth and migration. Although vector-borne diseases will expand their reach and death tolls (especially among elderly people) will increase because of heatwaves, the indirect effects of climate change on water, food security and extreme climatic events are likely to have the biggest effect on global health.

The Report called for a “new advocacy and public health movement ... to bring together governments, international agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities and academics from all disciplines to adapt to the effects of climate change on health.” Any adaptation or security measures should sit alongside the need for primary mitigation: that is, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and the need to increase carbon biosequestration through reforestation and improved agricultural practices.² As stated by the Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission:

The reduction of poverty and inequities in health is essential to the management of health effects of climate change. Vulnerability of poor populations will be caused by greater exposure and sensitivity to climate changes and reduced adaptive capacity³.

Health impacts from climate change and associated extreme climate events are not limited to third world or war torn countries. We have already seen examples of adverse community health impacts from extreme climate events here in Australia. For example:

- While it is widely reported that during the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires in 2009 173 people died, it is less well known that in the week preceding the fires, 374 people had their deaths hastened by the extreme heat event.⁴
- Impacts on the quality of drinking water through fire (or flood) destruction of treatment or distribution assets and/or direct contamination of water catchments from which raw water is harvested.⁵ In the event of convergence of major climate events – as was the case in the Wimmera Mallee region following the 2006 fires in the Grampians and subsequent floods – large amounts of ash and debris was washed into the water supply, adversely impacting water quality for a number of years.⁶

¹ Editorial, www.thelancet.com Vol 373 May 16, 2009: 1659

² Managing the health effects of climate change, Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission www.thelancet.com Vol 373 May 16, 2009: 1693

³ Ibid p 1695

⁴ Climate change Victoria : The science, our people and our state of play. Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, 2012 p99 <http://www.ces.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/99-144.pdf>

⁵ ibid page 103

⁶ ibid p104

- Impacts on mental health as seen following the Black Saturday fires as well as associated with other extreme events such as floods and “the long attrition involved in protracted dry weather events like drought”⁷
- Six years after the 2011 Queensland floods, health impacts (both physical and psychological) are still being felt and are being explored by researchers from the Queensland University of Technology⁸.

Importantly, climate change is expected to exacerbate current health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.⁹ Climate change projections indicate significant increases in the frequency of hot spells¹⁰, with the largest increases occurring in inland and northern areas.¹¹ Campbell et al.¹² concluded that climate change impacts in the 70 per cent of Australia that is desert would profoundly affect the costs and demands for health care, particularly for those Aboriginal people and communities already dealing with pre-existing disadvantage. Such climate impacts include hotter mean temperatures, which can cause increased heat stroke, cramps, heat exhaustion and deaths¹³.

Crime and violence

It is well established that the most disadvantaged in our society, and in particular Aboriginal people, are over-represented in the criminal justice system.¹⁴ This has potential to increase further as civil society is increasingly destabilised by the impacts of climate change, including tempers, irritability, and likelihood of physical aggression and violence that increase with increasing temperatures. As noted by Courtney Plante and Craig Anderson:

Numerous cross-sectional and time-series studies using real-world heat and violence data provide converging evidence. Cities and regions with higher temperatures tend to experience more violent crime than cooler regions, even after controlling for a dozen sociocultural factors such as age, race, poverty, and culture of honor. Further ruling out alternative explanations, some studies have assessed temperature and violence within the same geographic region over time. Across hours, days, months, and even years, similar trends emerge: When it is hotter, violence increases. From Chicago to Brisbane to Vancouver to Dallas, whether looking at domestic violence or physical assault, the same relationship emerges.¹⁵

Other studies from the USA show a link between heat waves and violence, and link this to increases in testosterone and changes in metabolic rates that affect the fight-flight response, leading to increased aggression, though potentially apathy after a certain point¹⁶.

In March 2017, police and a leading emergency doctor linked a surge in violence in Sydney – including the largest street brawl in a decade – with a protracted heatwave and alcohol consumption. New South Wales' official crime statistician Don Weatherburn was reported as agreeing that there was no doubt that there was a correlation between hot weather and street violence. Weatherburn could not

⁷ ibid p104

⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-15/researchers-analyse-ongoing-health-effects-2011-qld-floods/8182914>

⁹ Fritze et al. 2008; Green et al. 2009

¹⁰ Alexander and Arblaster 2009, cited in Green & Minchin (2014)

¹¹ Green, D & Minchin, L. 2014 Living on Climate-Changed Country: Indigenous Health, Well-Being and Climate Change in Remote Australian Communities, EcoHealth DOI: 10.1007/s10393-013-0892-9 http://web.science.unsw.edu.au/~donnag/dlg_lm_ecohealth.pdf; CSIRO and BoM 2007

¹² Campbell et al. (2008b), cited in Green & Minchin (2014)

¹³ McMichael et al. 2003, cited in Green & Minchin (2014)

¹⁴ Jesuit Social Services (2016) *States of Justice: Criminal justice trends across Australia*, <https://jss.org.au/states-of-justice-criminal-justice-trends-across-australia/>

¹⁵ <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/global-warming-and-violent-behavior>

¹⁶ <http://thebigsmoke.com.au/2017/02/13/link-heatwave-violent-crime/>

be certain whether this was due to heat per se or the increased consumption of alcohol, but was unequivocal that summer was much worse for violence than winter¹⁷.

Rising energy prices, lack of access to renewables and suitable housing

As extreme and protracted weather events increase, access to energy and reliable, safe housing becomes an acute need in order to ensure the security of human communities. The lack of equitable access to renewable and reliable energy sources for vulnerable communities will compound pre-existing marginalisation.

Jesuit Social Services believes that considerations of national security and emergency responses must consider pre-emptive policies of equitable access to what are increasingly considered essential protection against the effects of climate risk. For example, the amelioration of heat stress symptoms will be critical in the face of rising temperatures and to protect the populations from related health impacts. However, this will be less accessible to the most marginalised across Australia due to increases in energy prices, lack of access to energy efficient devices and the impacts of low quality housing. In July this year the ABC reported on research indicating that average wholesale power prices for east coast states in the National Energy Market have jumped between 150 per cent and 240 per cent over the past two years.¹⁸ Increases in electricity prices will continue to impact more severely upon lower income earners.

The Asia Pacific region

Real concern is held for the catastrophic impacts of climate change in our immediate region. Dunlop and Spratt make the case that:

Global warming will drive increasingly severe humanitarian crises, forced migration, political instability and conflict. The Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, is considered to be 'Disaster Alley' where some of the worst impacts will be.¹⁹

Already, at only 1.5 metres above sea level at their highest point, the Carteret Islands are some of the first to succumb to the rising ocean tides and have secured land for new homes on the main island of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, to the east of mainland Papua New Guinea²⁰. Jesuit Social Services' experiences in our settlement and refugee support and advocacy programs reinforce the enormous financial, physical and emotional toll of forced migration, both personally and politico-economically. Australia must plan ahead to fulfil our humanitarian and geo-political obligations to build resilience in such at-risk communities – including the Philippines and Bangladesh – in order to prevent instability, conflict and the large-scale movement of people, and to ensure safe passage and resettlement of climate refugees if/as the need arises.

Conclusion

Jesuit Social Services welcomes further consideration and ongoing exploration of the threats and long-term risks posed by climate change to national security. While military and intelligence responses are essential for the nation, approaches that identify, consider and address the inequities and risks to vulnerable communities should be at the heart of all Inquiries into climate change risk. It is these

¹⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/12192974/Sydneys-heatwave-blamed-for-spike-in-violence-as-Australians-drink-more.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-07/power-prices-off-the-chart/8687480>.

¹⁹ Dunlop, I & Spratt D (2017) *Disaster Alley: Climate Change Conflict and Risk*, published by Breakthrough - National Centre for Climate Restoration.

²⁰ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-07/carteret-climate-refugees-new-home/7693950>

groups across the world who will most acutely feel the effects of extreme climate events. Australian national security is underpinned by a dual commitment to social cohesion and protecting the health of our eco-systems. It is generally understood that a more equitable society is more secure. This remains a fundamental truism in the current age of climate change risks.

Our recommendations

- **That Governments prioritise the emergency mobilisation of resources at a speed and scale to preserve a liveable planet and protect the vulnerable from climate impacts.**
- **That the welfare of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of society, nationally and internationally, be recognised as a high-risk cohort and preventative measures put in place to:**
 - **Protect their lives, health and communities from the catastrophic climate impacts of flood, fire, droughts, other extreme weather events and the ultimate risk of rising sea levels**
 - **Protect their livelihoods and liveability as we transition to a zero carbon emissions future. In Australia this includes the transformation of economies, communities and housing premised on renewable energy sources and safe and fuel-efficient housing to protect disadvantaged people from harsh weather extremes and ensuing costs, as well as the provision of sufficient safety nets to ensure the ongoing health and safety of Australian communities.**
- **That Government invest in building the capacity of the Australian workforce across all sectors, but particularly in the community sector, to appreciate the importance of this issue and equip it to address climate change risks proactively.**
- **That Government invests in foreign aid to build resilience in at-risk communities (such as the Philippines and Bangladesh) to prevent instability, conflict and large scale movement of people due to climate change.**
- **That Government plan ahead for safe passage and resettlement of climate refugees if/as the need arises.**