

THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Act now or region will lose fight against climate change, report warns

Efforts to end poverty among our poorest neighbours will fail unless the Australian Government takes urgent action to tackle climate change and prepare for its effects, warns a report by a new coalition of aid, development, church and environment groups.

The two-part report, which includes research by CSIRO as well as policy recommendations, finds millions of people in the Asia Pacific region will be forced from their homes by sea level rises of up to 50cm by 2070, with hot spots including Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, China and small Pacific island states.

Launched today the report, *Australia Responds: Helping Our Neighbours Fight Climate Change*, finds climate change will threaten our region's economy and security unless governments and aid agencies prepare for its impacts. The CSIRO research, commissioned by the Climate Change and Development Roundtable, said there was "little room for optimism" in the region, finding that:

- Millions of lives will be at risk from dengue fever, malaria and other infectious diseases by the end of the century due to temperature rises, while flooding and tropical cyclones will increase deaths;
- Local and regional economies will be hit hard from chronic food and water insecurity and epidemic disease as well as extreme weather events. For example, Sri Lanka's GDP could drop by 2.4% with less than 2°C of warming;
- Temperatures will increase by 0.5–2°C by 2030 and up to 7°C by 2070 particularly in northern Pakistan and India and western China.

World Vision Chief Executive **Tim Costello** said the poorest people in the poorest countries will be hardest hit by climate change.

"Climate change will fundamentally change the way we aid the world's poor. It will undermine the value and impact of current aid spending and will lead to far greater calls for assistance from those hurt most. The impacts of climate change will require Australia to respond far more frequently," he said.

The policy recommendations, co-authored by 12 groups, call for urgent action to limit the worst affects of climate change. They recommend Australia should reduce greenhouse pollution and:

- prioritise renewable energy and energy efficiency programs in developing countries
- help communities withstand the impacts of climate change and prepare for disasters
- review immigration programs to consider support for people displaced in the region

Oxfam Australia Executive Director **Andrew Hewett** said the report found overwhelming evidence that climate change was occurring while Australia was, per person, the worst greenhouse polluter in the world, yet was doing little to combat it: "We've reached the point where inaction on climate change is unacceptable. Our neighbours look to Australia for leadership on reducing its cause and effects," he said.

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Victorian and Tasmanian moderator of the Uniting Church Rev **Jason Kioa**, himself a Pacific Islander, said global warming was as much a moral, social, economic and theological issue as an environmental one: “We’re deeply concerned about the impact climate change will have on the lives of vulnerable people in our region.”

For a copy of the reports go to: www.ccdr.org.au

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