

Funding a Resilient Future:

Submission to the 2021-22 Federal Budget

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action (ELCA) welcomes the opportunity to make the following submission to the 2021-22 Federal Budget. Our submission is focussed on ensuring an adequate budget response to the escalating threat of fire and other emergencies in the context of our worsening climate crisis.

ELCA recognizes that responding to the escalating fire danger, along with other dangers of a rapidly warming world, begins with ensuring that Australia plays its part in limiting the global average temperature rise to well below 2°C, beyond which we will face almost unimaginable challenges. This demands that Australia cut its greenhouse emissions in half over the coming decade and achieves net zero emissions by 2040 at the latest. With regards to the necessary budgetary measures required to accelerate Australia's energy transition and achieve net zero emissions as soon as possible, ELCA wishes to **endorse the recommendations put forward by the Climate Council in its submission to the 2021-22 Federal Budget.**

In addition, ELCA recommends the following investments to help protect Australians from the impacts of climate change that can no longer be avoided. These are consistent with the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and the Australian Bushfire and Climate Plan developed by ELCA in consultation with scientists, bushfire survivors, medics, Indigenous fire practitioners and other experts.

Our overarching recommendation is that the Australian Government include, as part of the 2021-22 Federal Budget and forward estimates, a fully-costed response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

While welcoming relevant funding announcements made prior to or following the final report of the Royal Commission – including \$88m for a new disaster research centre – we are concerned that there have been few commitments of *new* funding towards implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations, and none at a scale that matches the challenges that our country now faces due to worsening extreme weather fuelled by climate change. Moreover, there remain critical and longstanding shortfalls in our national capabilities, including aerial firefighting assets, that are yet to be addressed despite repeated recommendations.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of areas that we believe must see a substantial increase in Federal funding, in order to ensure that all recommendations of the Royal Commission and other inquiries are adequately funded and that Australia is better able to cope with the disasters of today and tomorrow. This list follows three 'R's set

out in our Australian Bushfire and Climate Plan - our **Response** to the growing risk of emergencies in the context of climate change, our **Readiness** to deal with escalating risks, and effective, community-driven **Recovery**. We recognise that every dollar spent in prevention and preparedness saves many more dollars in avoided recovery costs, and the clear necessity to prepare proactively for the threats we know are coming, rather than merely dealing with disasters when they happen.

RESPONSE

- Federal funding sufficient to develop a modest sovereign medium and large **aerial firefighting capability** given increasing overlap with northern hemisphere fire seasons, limiting access to leased aircraft.
- Funding to develop a coordinated national system of **remote sensing** to aid rapid detection, location, fast response and extinguishment of new fires.
- In recognition of the vital support capabilities of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in disaster response and the increasing demand for these capabilities due to more intense and/or frequent extreme weather disasters, **funding for an expanded role for ADF reserves in supporting disaster response**, including increased funding for domestic disaster exercises and training. (Noting that this must not duplicate or usurp the response roles of state and territory emergency management agencies, which are tailored to local hazards and needs.)
- Dedicated funding for an expanded **national coordination role for Emergency Management Australia** clearly outlined in the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

READINESS

- Funding for an **Indigenous-led National Cultural Fire Strategy** to complement and inform existing land and fuel management practices.
- A grant scheme designed to better empower local communities to lead disaster prevention, preparation, response and recovery through the establishment of local **Community Resilience Hubs**.
- In recognition that lower-income families may face prohibitive costs in upgrading their properties to be more disaster resilient, the Federal Government should establish **appropriate rebates and subsidies to enable vulnerable communities to be better prepared** for today's greater fire risks and other threats and to "build back better" in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Funding to support **new climate modelling** down to the local level recommended by the Royal Commission.

RECOVERY

- Establish a **National Climate Disaster Fund (NCDF)** to pay for the escalating cost of climate-fuelled disasters, with funds raised through a \$1 levy per tonne

of carbon dioxide pollution from fossil fuel extraction, production and transport in Australia. (A detailed and costed proposal for such a scheme has been developed by The Australia Institute: <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/the-national-climate-disaster-fund/>.)

- Extension of **support for decentralised, community-owned energy and other resilient infrastructure**, and the integration of such initiatives into recovery and rebuilding efforts.
- Funding for accessible and ongoing **mental health support** for emergency responders and affected communities.

These areas of focus must be considered one part of Australia's broader response to the challenges of climate change. They should be included in a comprehensive and fully costed response to the Royal Commission, and are in no way a substitute for stronger efforts towards tackling the root causes of climate change by moving beyond fossil fuels, abandoning the so-called "gas-fired recovery" in favour of renewables, and achieving zero emissions as soon as possible.

(Please find attached, as a supplement to this submission, the aforementioned [*Australian Bushfire and Climate Plan*](#), in which these proposals are presented in more detail.)