

WHAT DOES CLIMATE CHANGE MEAN FOR YOUR LOCAL AREA?

THE FEDERAL ELECTORATE OF FLINDERS

The Climate Council is an independent, crowd-funded organisation providing quality information on climate change to the Australian public.

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THE FEDERAL ELECTORATE OF FLINDERS

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Australia is getting hotter. The ten hottest years on record have all happened since 1980.¹ The summer of 2012/2013 was our hottest on record, and the records kept tumbling in the summer of 2013/2014 when in just 90 days over 156 records for heat, bushfires and drought were broken around the country.²

Parts of Australia are getting drier. Climate change will play a role in increasing drought frequency in

southern Australia, with decreases in the amount of rainfall potentially as high as 10% by 2030, and 30% by 2070.³

Sea levels are rising around Australia. Currently sea levels have been rising at an average of 1.4mm per year, in future this is very likely to increase, with a 1.1 m sea level rise leaving \$226 billion in commercial, industrial, road and rail, and residential assets exposed to coastal flooding.⁴

Heatwaves

Heatwaves are becoming hotter, lasting longer and occurring more often, with significant impacts for Victorian's health, infrastructure and environment.

Figure one shows the warming trend being experienced in Victoria. Heatwaves in Victoria are also becoming more intense, with the average intensity of heatwaves increasing in Melbourne by 1.5°C.⁵ Heatwaves in Melbourne are also starting on average 17 days earlier than they used to.

HEALTH: More record hot days and associated heatwaves increase the risk of heat-related illnesses and death, particularly in the elderly. Accounts of the January heatwave in Victoria point to significant health impacts, 203 heat-related deaths, a 20-fold increase in ambulance call-outs, a four-fold increase in calls to nurses-on-call, and a four-fold increase to locum doctors.⁶

INFRASTRUCTURE: Increase demand for electricity during the 2009 heatwave broke previous records. During this heatwave the Basslink electricity cable between Tasmania and Victoria reached maximum operating temperature and was automatically shut down for safety reasons. This shutdown, combined with faults at a number of transformers, caused widespread blackouts across Melbourne; on the evening of 30 January 2009, an estimated 500,000 residents were without power. In January 2014, Victorian electricity consumption topped 10,300 megawatts (MW), with the highest level of electricity use occurring during the heatwave.⁷

AGRICULTURE: Heatwaves are also impacting Victoria's livestock, on the 11th of January 2014, a heatwave led to the death of more than 100 cows due to heat stress, during a four-day heatwave in southern Victoria.⁸ This has particular implications for the agricultural sector within the Flinders electorate.

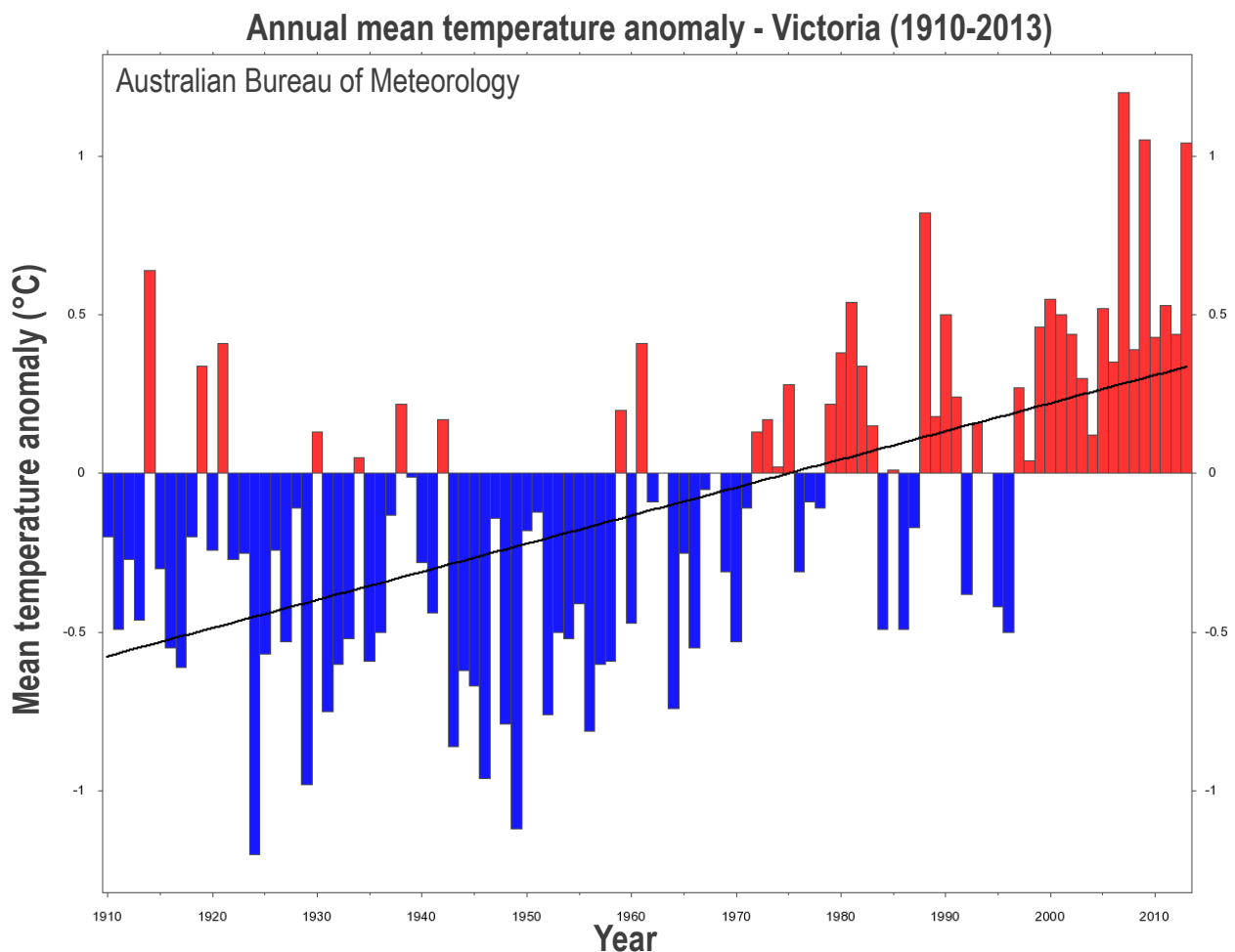


Figure One: Victoria increasing heat (Australian Bureau of Meteorology)

Reduced Rainfall:

Increasing pressure on urban water supplies & agriculture

Average rainfall in southern Australia is projected to continue to decrease with implications for urban water supplies, particularly in major cities such as Melbourne.

Rainfall declines will intensify pressure on Melbourne's water supplies as droughts increase in frequency and severity.⁹

From 2007-2010 Melbourne was placed on Stage 3 restrictions and in

2009 Melbourne's water storage levels fell to their minimum of 25.6%.¹⁰

Reduced rainfall also affected agricultural electorates such as Flinders, as restrictions required industry to adhere to targets and limit the use of water in the agriculture sector—leading to a decline in crop yields.¹¹

As a rural electorate that thrives on dairying, wineries and poultry, continued declines in rainfall will have significant impacts on the growth and prosperity of the electorate of Flinders.

Bushfires:

Devastating Victoria

Hotter, drier weather in Victoria is also driving up bushfire danger weather.

The electorate of Flinders is no stranger to the devastating impacts of bushfires, with local CFA brigades in the electorate working tirelessly to contain the fires.

The Black Saturday bushfires killed 173 people, injured 414 people, destroyed 2,100 homes, displaced 7,562 people and burnt over 1,100,000 acres.¹²

Climate change is likely to increase conditions for large and intense bushfires.¹³

One estimate of the future economic costs of bushfires indicates that with no adaptive change, increased damage to the agricultural industry in Victoria by 2050 could add \$1.4 billion to existing costs.¹⁴

By 2030 it has been estimated that the number of professional firefighters will need to approximately double (compared to 2010) to keep pace with increased population, asset value and fire danger weather. This has implications for the capacity of fire fighting teams in Victoria.¹⁵

Coastal Flooding:

Billions of dollars worth of damages

Sea level has already risen and continues to rise due to climate change. Climate change exacerbates coastal flooding from a storm surge as the storm rises on higher sea levels. Over half the Australian coastline is vulnerable to recession from rising sea level, with 80% of the Victorian coastline at risk.¹⁶

Victoria is one of the states with the most commercial buildings exposed to a 1.1 metres rise in sea level, with 1,500-2,000 buildings at risk, at a cost of \$8billion-\$12billion. The number of light industrial buildings exposed in the state range from 600-1000 at a cost of between \$500 and \$800 million.

In Melbourne over 50 commercial buildings are exposed to sea level rise. The City of Melbourne has the greatest length of rail exposed, with between 27 and 39km of rail line at risk. Damages are between \$100 and \$500 million.

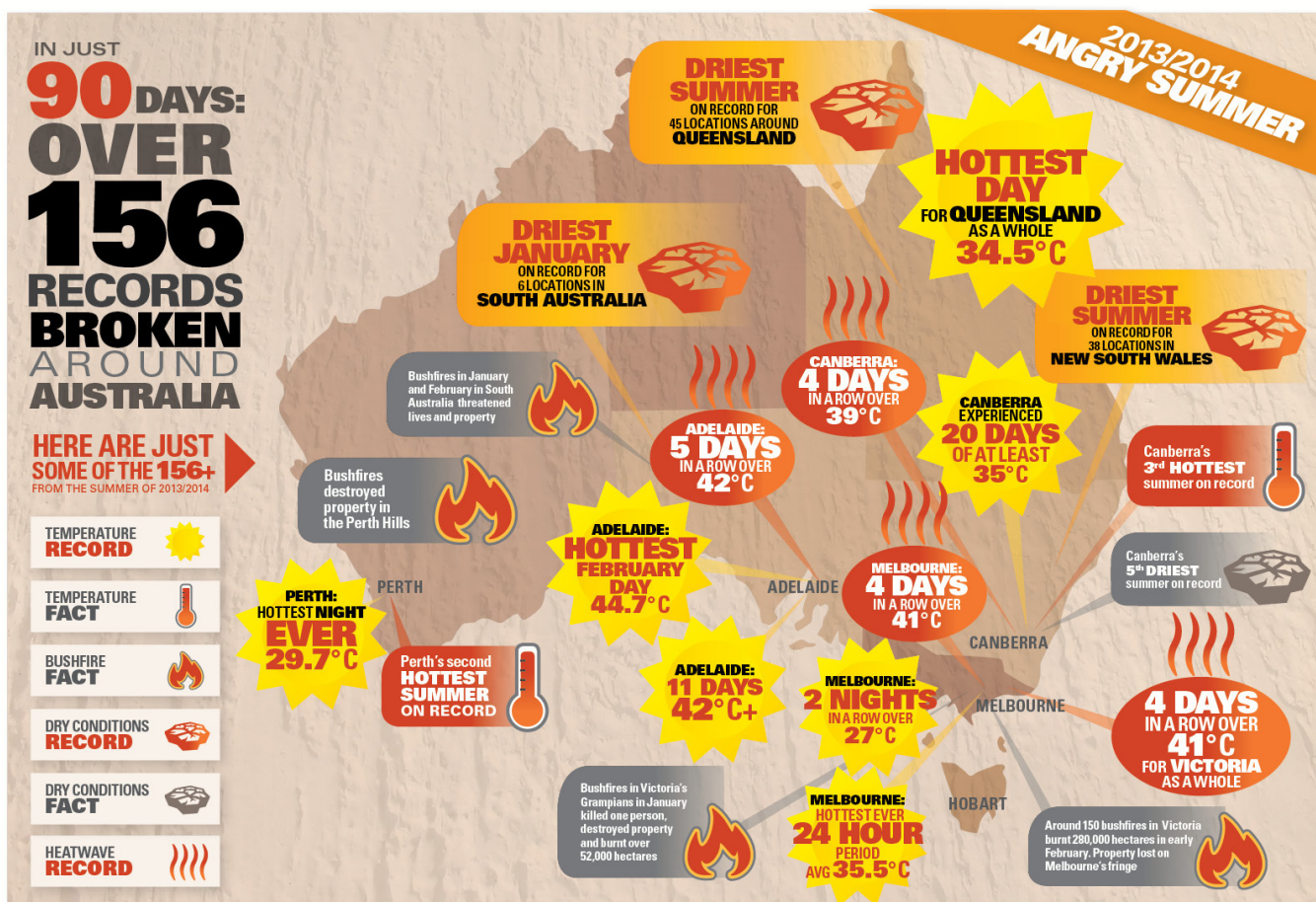
There are 31,000-48,000 residential houses threatened by sea level rise.¹⁷

Whilst Flinders is not located on the coast, the economic implications of coastal flooding will be felt throughout the state.

This is the Critical Decade for Flinders

Flinders, and Victoria more broadly, will be seriously impacted by climate change. Heatwaves, bushfires, reduced rainfall and coastal flooding will contribute to declines in human health, slow the growth of the agricultural sector and cause billions of dollars in damages to vulnerable coastal infrastructure.

The impacts of climate change are already being observed. Australia must strive to cut its emissions rapidly and deeply to join global efforts to stabilise the world's climate and reduce the risk of even more extreme events, including bushfires, heatwaves and coastal flooding. This is the critical decade to get on with the job.



Source: BoM 2014a-h; The Age 18 January 2014; The Age 11 February 2014

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Figure Two: Australia's Angry Summer of 2013/14

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