

MINISTERIAL INFORMATION REQUEST

MB18-003433
Date Sent to MO: 09/08/2018

MINISTER: Greg Hunt

Issue: Climate change and health (Mr Josh Frydenberg MP)

Response:

Australia's responses to the health effects of climate change are managed through its existing health systems. These structures have the capacity to respond to changes in demand brought about by various pressures, including climate change.

Australia has preventive health mechanisms in place to provide a healthy and safe environment, for example, by ensuring clean water and air, protection from pollutants and surveillance systems to detect the spread of disease, as well as response systems to manage the spread of disease and other health crises.

The Department of Health, on behalf of the Government, manages a range of programs to address many of the health conditions which may be affected by climate change. These programs can be scaled up or down to meet any prominent and long-term changes in disease prevalence. They are regularly reviewed to ensure they best meet the health needs of Australia.

Whilst state and territory jurisdictions take the lead on any direct impacts of environmental emergencies, the indirect impacts are dealt with through the relevant functional or policy areas of the Department, and via national consultative forums with the Australian states and territories.

Where a health event significantly affects a state or territory, or affects multiple jurisdictions, a mechanism exists where the Australian Government offers national coordination and assistance and works with state and territory governments to develop an appropriate national response.

Combined, these approaches will ensure that Australia is able to monitor and respond to health issues that may arise from climate change, and direct resources where needed.

Australian Government Disaster and Resilience Reference Group

The Government released the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (the Strategy) in December 2015, to articulate how Australia is managing the risks of a variable and changing climate. This work is being led by the Department of the Environment and Energy.

The Australian Government Disaster and Resilience Reference Group (the Reference Group), established under the Strategy aims to assist Government Departments manage climate risks to their policies, programs and assets.

The Department of Health works with other government agencies on the Reference Group, including the Department of the Environment and Energy, Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Bureau of Meteorology, to plan for, prepare and manage climate and disaster issues as they impact, or may impact, the work of the public service.

The Reference Group has sponsored the Department of the Environment and Energy and the CSIRO's development of a climate specific risk management tool, providing officers with a range of resources to identify likely climate scenarios and incorporate these into their risk management processes. The Department of Health is one of the APS Agencies trialling the tool at the Reference Group's request.

The Department of Health is also working with the Reference Group in early preparatory work to assist the National Resilience Taskforce in developing and testing a framework to help Government Departments manage climate risks to their policies, programs and assets.

Following recent extreme climate episodes that have greatly impacted communities across the country, a National Resilience Taskforce has been established to reduce the impacts of natural disasters on the Australian community. The Taskforce sits within the Department of Home Affairs and its first priority is to develop a five-year national disaster mitigation framework to reduce the impact of disasters.

This document was released under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 by the Department of Health

Minister Greg Hunt

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Division/Branch Portfolio Strategies/Strategic Policy

Adviser/DLO Comments:

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