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Climate change is a national security threat to an underprepared Australia: new report

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A report released by the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) today warns Australia faces a significant national security threat if defence and security policies do not urgently start addressing climate change.

The Longest Conflict: Australia's Climate Security Challenge finds Australia will struggle to deal with climate vulnerabilities domestically and within our region. Interviews with experts from our closest allies, the United Kingdom and United States, reveal Australia has become a laggard in taking necessary action to prepare our defence force.

CPD CEO Travers McLeod said whilst militaries like the US and the UK take climate security extremely seriously, Australia is underprepared and falling further behind.

"Australia is extremely vulnerable to climatic impacts such as prolonged incidents of extreme heat, changed rainfall composition, sea level rises and more frequent natural disasters.

"Australia is also in a region with the most vulnerability to climate change. Seven out of ten of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change are in the Asia-Pacific. By 2030, approximately 879 million people will live in low elevation coastal zones vulnerable to storm surges and sea level rises, with 70% of these residing in Asia.

"The Federal Government must urgently develop our military preparedness and readiness to respond to the climate security crises forecast by our closest allies.

The report argues that without adequate planning our defence force will be under increasingly severe pressure to deal effectively with the range of climatic risks.

Former UK Climate & Energy Security Envoy, Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, was among those interviewed and is in Australia officially launching the report on 22 June in Melbourne. He warns a twenty-first century defence capability for Australia will be incomplete without a comprehensive climate security approach.

"The security environment is changing. The world around us is changing. Australia's defence strategy and operational plans need to reflect these changes.

The report recommends climate security be incorporated into the forthcoming Defence White Paper. It also recommends a Climate Security Strategy be developed to guide Australia's response and to enhance the effectiveness of the Australian Defence Force.

Travers McLeod and Rear Admiral Morisetti are available for interview.

Full report available here: www.cpd.org.au

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