

NEWS RELEASE FROM CLIMATE CHANGE BALMAIN-ROZELLE



Worse storms to come?

Extreme rainfall, gale force winds, and extensive flooding from the Illawarra to the Hunter are a reminder that Australia is not immune to the effects of climate change, according to Sydney climate action group Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle (CCBR).

CCBR president Dominic Case said that those experiencing the devastating weather, or seeing the TV reports and learning about the enormous damage it caused, say it is the worst they have seen.

"These damaging events are part of a changing climate: changes that are making the world's weather more severe", Mr Case said.

"The combination of an intense east coast low, gale force on-shore winds and warmer ocean temperatures has resulted in an extreme weather event this week. The significant point is that warmer ocean temperatures mean increased evaporation, which feeds more moisture into the atmosphere, resulting in higher rainfall", he said.

Mr Case explained that excess greenhouse gases emitted by burning fossil fuels are trapping more and more heat.

"Since 1998 our climate has been absorbing four Hiroshima bombs' worth of heat every second. Ninety percent of this heat is being absorbed by the oceans", he added.

"As global temperatures rise, scientists predict that storms of this type are most likely to increase in intensity, causing increased amounts of damage when they occur. Moreover, they will become less predictable in when and where they will strike, and for how long, limiting our ability to fully prepare for them."

Mr Case also connected storms like this with Australia's very high reliance on coal.

"Coal is the biggest contributor to global warming. We cannot have both a safe climate and go on mining and burning coal – it's not possible. By their strong support for coal mining and coal power, the NSW and federal governments are failing in their most basic responsibility – to protect their citizens.

"Approving 16 new coal mines in the Hunter Valley and more coal mines in the Galilee basin of north Queensland, is completely at odds with working towards a safe climate."

NSW is the largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions of all states and territories, and is second only to Queensland in the number of coal mines and coal-fired power stations.

CCBR is calling on the NSW government to phase out coal mining and coal-fired power stations as quickly as possible, and to develop the renewable energy industry in its place. It urges the NSW government to support the current Renewable Energy Target of 41,000 GWh/year by 2020, by acting to achieve that level pro rata in NSW, and to set much more ambitious targets for NSW in the years after 2020.

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle is a group of Sydney inner west residents eager to reduce Australia's excessive greenhouse gas emissions. The group aims to help create a world which is much less reliant on fossil fuels, thus heading off the greatest catastrophe now facing the earth, that of global warming.

Contact Dominic Case on 0419 442 018 or ccbalroz@gmail.com

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http://www.climatechangebr.org/USERFILES/Extreme_storm_04-15.doc