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Gore launches a 10-year safe climate plan

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If Australia is to urgently respond to what is increasingly being considered the climate emergency, it needs a feasible plan for fundamental action this decade. Safe Climate Australia, the new organisation launched by Al Gore in Melbourne last month, has been established to develop one.



Credit: Safe Climate Australia

The world's sea-level rise experts tell us we can expect at least up to a metre of sea-level rise by the end of this century, possibly two to three. 'Now that is catastrophic,' says Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, Director of the Centre for Marine Studies at the University of Queensland and a founding member of Safe Climate Australia (SCA).

'There is no question that we must take aggressive action to bring the climate back to a safe level,' he said at the launch.

SCA is an apolitical, non-profit organisation founded by concerned scientists, community and business leaders, and driven by the latest science. Its goals are, first, to review the most recent evidence on climate trends and scenarios, and then to provide a replicable, whole-of-society plan to restructure Australia's economy, transitioning it out of fossil fuels reliance to clean, 'net-zero carbon' alternatives – at emergency speed.

The transition plan will be developed over two years for the benefit of all sectors of industry, government and the community.

It builds on Al Gore's 'Repower America' campaign which aims to switch the United States to clean energy within a decade. SCA's plan has a broader brief than Gore's – as well as tackling energy and transport, it aims to embrace all sectors of the Australian economy

Committing to a safe climate is a radically different approach to the way the climate change issue is being generally viewed and approached. The dominant paradigm speculates about the degrees of change humanity and the Earth's system can tolerate (for example, up to 2°C of warming above pre-industrial levels is considered tolerable). The safe climate approach, however, identifies a band of conditions known to be safe for life as we know it. This is well below the present level of 390 parts per million CO₂ and likely to fall between 280 and 325 parts per million CO₂.¹

The management challenge to be addressed by SCA's plan is first how to achieve this lower level, and then how to keep the climate

within that safe band. If the Earth's system breaches those limits, action must be taken to bring it back to within the safety zone.

Speaking at the launch, Al Gore said: 'What you have before you with this launch is a very practical, very carefully considered transition plan towards a safe climate. I urge each and every one of you to respond positively to the opportunity that it represents, because we can solve this crisis. We have everything we need to do so.'

Temperature regulation in the body is a useful analogy to the current climate scenarios. As Mr Gore put it, 'the planet has a fever.' Core human temperature rarely deviates from 37°C – even after a fever a healthy person reverts to 37°C. A sustained two or three degree temperature rise is a major physical disruption at the human scale, and likewise at the planetary one.

Unless we apply the same homeostatic model to the management of the planet, the science tells us that our business-as-usual behaviour will drive conditions on Earth to a new state of equilibrium that will be far less hospitable for humans and other life.

CEO of the new organisation, Brendan Condon, highlighted that over the past few years workers in our 'front line' emergency services have had first-hand experience of the potential influence of climate change in Australia, tackling unprecedented fire conditions, flash floods and cyclonic winds.

He presented members of the rural fire, police and SES services to the launch audience, who form part of a 35-member team committed to raising the profile of climate change impacts and SCA, with a 6000-kilometre relay run down the east coast of Australia.

The Run for a Safe Climate will commence in November at Queensland's Daintree World Heritage site and, heading south, will stop for profile-raising events at other national iconic sites and features likely to be directly impacted by climate change. The run will finish in Melbourne after visiting the Coorong, at the mouth of the Murray River, near Adelaide.

More information:
Safe Climate Australia,
www.safecclimateaustralia.org

¹ Figures from Safe Climate Australia
(www.safecclimateaustralia.org/about-safe-climate-australia/contact-us<<http://www.safecclimateaustralia.org/about-safe-climate-australia/contact-us>>); elsewhere in this issue, figures sourced from CSIRO

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