

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE FACTSHEET

Fact is we cannot sit around waiting for others to act on reducing carbon emissions.

The concept of environmental sustainability has had a major influence on the practice of urban planning over the past 20 years. Environmental sustainability means reducing our impact on the environment and adopting practices that use natural resources sustainably. Also covered by environmental sustainability is good environmental management. This includes energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion, water use, waste reduction and management, and use of materials. Environmental sustainability has a strong focus on the needs of future generations. One of the most quoted definitions is, Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Australia's average temperature has risen by 1-degree celsius since 1910. The mapping of Australia's (and the world's) forecasted weather by the CSIRO predicts extreme weather events to be more common. It is a fact that global warming has been the direct result of increased emissions and greenhouse gases by humans.

As unionists, a way to facilitate this change is by forcing employers through EBA's to commit to working and achieving carbon emission reductions, not only for our own health and wellbeing but the health of the next generation. Making sure our employers and industry embrace renewable resources and technology is a must moving forward.

The impact extreme weather has on us as workers also needs to be addressed. Working in extreme heat is dangerous and can have both short- and long-term effects on the human body. Local Government in Victoria is very hesitant to commit to "tools down" cut off temperatures for outdoor workers. Whilst ASU members working in Council building often experience varying temperatures indoors due to their building cooling being inefficient on extremely hot days this can often be because of too many people working in an office where cooling just does not cope.

Home and community care workers face extreme conditions, usually, when they are working in a client's home or taking a client out for shopping. Again, they are exposed to extreme weather conditions and this needs to be addressed at the worksite through consultation and better policies.