



# **Women's Health Victoria**

## **Gendered Policy Framework**

# **Gender Impact Assessment: Climate Change**

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This paper is part of Women's Health Victoria's gender impact assessment initiatives within the broader context of a gendered policy framework.

A gendered policy framework is a tool that enables the development of policy that takes account of and is responsive to gender. It can be applied at the macro and micro level to any policy or program that is being developed or implemented. A gendered policy framework has three components: Gendered Data, Gender Impact Assessment and Gender Awareness Raising.

All policy and planning decisions impact differently on women and men, even if at first glance they appear to be gender neutral. Sometimes the difference is appropriate although it may not be. The aim of a gendered policy framework is to ensure that these differences are anticipated and the policy consequences are focused on achieving gender equity.

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Published June 2009  
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This paper is also available at:  
<http://www.whv.org.au/publications-resources/gender-impact-assessments>

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## Introduction

Climate change is experienced by all people, but the impact of the causes, effects and solutions is gendered<sup>1</sup>. How women and men respond, are consulted and supported, and contribute, differs. Furthermore, the way policy is planned, developed and implemented, impacts on this. The aim of this paper is to highlight the issues attached to the gendered nature of climate change, and to discuss the policy context of Australia and Victoria.

In doing so, this paper outlines the effects and impact of climate change<sup>i</sup>. It draws attention to the plight and role of women in this and looks at the impact on rural women in Australia, women from lower socioeconomic and disadvantaged backgrounds, and Indigenous women. It also raises the issue of violence during and after disaster and emergency situations. The paper concludes with a discussion about the current global and national policy context, with recommendations for a gender framework in the development and implementation of climate change and drought policy in Australia.

## 1. Issue

### 1.1 Climate change

#### 1.1.1 *What is climate change?*

Climate change can refer to measurable changes that persist over time, typically decades or longer, in the properties and state of the climate<sup>2</sup>. However, this paper adopts the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) definition, which distinguishes between naturally caused climate variability and climate change attributable to human activity:

‘Climate change’ means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods<sup>3</sup>.

A 2003 Australian guide to climate change states that the immediate challenge relates to coping with or minimising any adverse effects and taking advantage of any potential benefits, while also endeavouring to minimise the impact of human-induced climate change<sup>4</sup>.

#### 1.1.2 *The global impact of climate change*

In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)<sup>ii</sup>. The IPCC was formed in response to recognition that human societies, through our use of resources and generation of waste products, contribute to the changing of Earth’s climatic environment<sup>4</sup>. It provides scientific technical and socio-economic information that is policy-relevant but policy neutral, to international decision makers.

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<sup>i</sup> For a non-technical introduction to the history of climate change see Chapter 1-Introduction, Section 1.1 ‘A brief history of climate change’, pg 11, in *Climate Change: An Australian Guide to the Science and Potential Impacts*; an Australian Department of Climate Change report available from: <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/science/guide>

<sup>ii</sup> See the IPCC website: <http://www.ipcc.ch/about/index.htm>. The IPCC does not conduct its own research but assesses the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature and creates reports based on contributions from the international scientific community.

The latest report from the IPCC, *Climate Change and Water*, states that 'adverse effects of climate change on freshwater systems aggravate the impacts of other stresses, such as population growth, changing economic activity, land-use change and urbanisation'<sup>5</sup>. The report adds that observational records and climate projections show that 'freshwater resources are vulnerable and have the potential to be strongly impacted by climate change, with wide-ranging consequences for human societies and ecosystems'<sup>5</sup>.

Across the globe, 'the area of land classified as very dry has more than doubled since the 1970s'<sup>5</sup>. The increased frequency of heavy rainfalls will generate risk of floods, while the 'proportion of land surface in extreme drought' at any one time is expected to increase<sup>5</sup>. The effect of higher water temperatures, floods and droughts, are projected to impact on water quality and increase existing forms of water pollution<sup>5</sup>.

Individual nations are employing their own measures to address climate change, but there is also a strong and growing international effort in this field. In international law two instruments specifically address the issue of climate change: the first is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is an international treaty that was joined by many countries in 1992, in an attempt to reduce the effects of climate change. The second is the Kyoto Protocol, which in 2005 was added to the treaty and approved by some 182 nations. The Protocol now includes legally binding measures for nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions<sup>6</sup>. The first official act of the current Australian Government was to sign the Kyoto Protocol, pledging to ensure that greenhouse emissions between 2008 and 2012 do not increase more than 8 percent above 1990 levels<sup>7</sup>.

### **1.1.3 Australia and climate change**

Australia is impacted by climate change. Australian cities and towns concentrated near the coast will be affected by rising sea-levels and storms. There will be increased extreme weather with more intense cyclones in the north of the country and risk of fires elsewhere. Heat related deaths in major urban centres are predicted to become five times more likely by 2050<sup>8</sup>.

In December 2007, the Australia Government created the Department of Climate Change, and a climate change framework was developed with the aim to:

- Reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions;
- Adapt to the impacts of climate change; and,
- Help to shape a global solution<sup>9</sup>.

The Australian Government says that climate change is one of the greatest economic, social and environmental challenges that exist today<sup>10</sup>.

### **1.1.4 Victoria and climate change**

In Victoria, eleven of the twelve years from 1995 to 2006 have been among the warmest on record since 1850<sup>11</sup>. Since 1950, the average temperature has increased by 1.3°C and rainfall has decreased dramatically. In the west of Victoria, rainfall has decreased by 10mm per decade, and in the central and eastern areas it has fallen by more than 20mm per decade<sup>11</sup>. Melbourne dams have had a reduction in inflow of about 30 percent<sup>11</sup>.

According to a report by the Department of Planning and Community Development (Victoria), climate change will not be characterised by gradual shifts in systems, but will more likely involve

a series of events that exceed known thresholds. The Department of Sustainability and Environment says that climate change means:

- A changing background in 'average' climate e.g. Total annual rainfall;
- Changing base rates (frequency and intensity) for extremes;
- Changing resilience and coping capacity;
- On-going loss of inbuilt adaptive capacity; and,
- The possibility of new types of situations/emergencies<sup>11</sup>.

This means the increased frequency of severe weather such as floods and bushfires.

Climate change related stresses on our environment and human systems include:

- Changes in agricultural production;
- Biodiversity loss and change;
- Human health problems from heat-stress and insect-borne diseases;
- Changing energy demands;
- Increased coastal vulnerability; and,
- Economic impacts (e.g. assets at risk, insurance)<sup>11</sup>.

Likely risks to communities are:

- Possible 20-60 percent increase in extreme heat-related deaths by 2050;
- Risk to vulnerable sections of the community;
- Emergency response planning; and,
- Increased disease risk<sup>11</sup>.

All of this can have an impact on people's mental health. Australian researchers say that this will have more to do with people's 'emerging awareness of climate change as a global threat' rather than as a result of the experience of climate change events themselves<sup>12</sup>. A deepening awareness and understanding about climate change will impact on people's 'social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing'<sup>12</sup>. An example of this is in rural communities where the effects of drought have been felt for some time now, and this, combined with a growing understanding of climate change is impacting on the health and wellbeing of families and individuals. Within this, the impact on women and men is different.

## **1.2 Women and climate change**

### **1.2.1 Gender and climate change**

Climate change is not gender neutral<sup>13</sup>. Studies reveal that women and men's decisions differ along risk-taking lines, use and type of coping strategies, adaptability, and advice-taking and information-seeking behaviours<sup>13</sup>. Much of this has to do with existing gender roles and inequalities. The effects of climate change, including disaster and emergency situations, can magnify these and create new inequities and vulnerabilities<sup>13</sup>.

Elaine Enarson, author of the book *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster*, states that gender inequalities more than gender differences explain the disproportionate impacts of disasters on women and girls<sup>14</sup>. While there are significant differences between women in different geographical locations, women as a whole are more likely than men at the time of an extreme environmental event to:

- Live below the poverty line;
- Rely upon state supported social services;
- Lack savings, credit, insurance;
- Lack inheritance rights, land rights, control;
- Be unemployed or work in the informal economy;
- Be self-employed, home-based, contingent workers;
- Reside alone, be rearing children alone;
- Depend on functioning caregiving systems;
- Depend on public transportation, travel with dependents;
- Reside in public housing, mobile homes, rental housing, informal settlements;
- Live at risk of assault and abuse, be displaced into domestic violence shelters;
- Be responsible for others (family, kin, neighbours) as paid and unpaid caregivers;
- Physically depend on others due to late pregnancy, recent childbirth, age, chronic illness;
- Be living with disabilities, chronic illness;
- Be subject to gender norms controlling mobility and use of public space; and,
- Be subject to male authority in the household regarding use of emergency assistance assets and key decisions about evacuation and relocation<sup>14</sup>.

Women generally have less access to resources for disaster preparation, mitigation and rehabilitation<sup>13</sup>. Particularly in developing nations, gendered division of labour finds an over-representation of women in agricultural and informal sectors, which are generally more vulnerable to disasters<sup>13</sup>. Women in developing nations generally have less access to financial resources, land, education, health and other basic rights than men<sup>15</sup>. Climate change can reduce this further, making it more difficult to access basic needs and natural resources, such as shelter, food, water and fuel. All of this increases women's workload<sup>13</sup> while also generally excluding women from decision-making processes<sup>15</sup>.

This is exacerbated by the socioeconomic situation of women in the world. Globally, women make up 70 percent of the world's poor. Social inequity means that women have less access to money, land, food, protection from violence, education and healthcare services<sup>15</sup>. For example, in places such as Bangladesh, India and Nepal, where natural disasters are frequent, women's livelihoods are lost and hunger prevails when flood or cyclone destroys crops, homes and assets. The poorer women are, the less likely they are to be able to rebuild their lives<sup>15</sup>.

The combination of gendered roles and socioeconomic conditions was recently found to contribute to higher mortality rates in women than men in natural disaster situations. A 2007 UK study found that natural disasters do not affect people equally and that biological and physiological differences between women and men are insufficient reason to explain 'large-scale difference in mortality rates' from natural disasters and their aftermath<sup>16</sup>. Researchers attributed the difference to social norms and role behaviours, and in particular, to women's socioeconomic status.

The study analysed data from 141 countries for the period of 1981-2002 looking at 'disaster strength and its interaction with socioeconomic status of women on the change in the gender gap in life expectancy'<sup>16</sup>. They found three things:

1. Natural disasters lower the life expectancy of women more than that of men;
2. The stronger the disaster, the greater effect on the gender gap in life expectancy;

3. The higher women's socioeconomic status, the weaker the effect on the gender gap in life expectancy<sup>16</sup>.

It is also increasingly becoming recognised that women play important roles in climate change mitigation<sup>13</sup>. Despite managing most of the household duties, shouldering carer and childcare responsibilities and education, women have also been found 'ready to take action to mitigate climate change as a means of risk aversion'<sup>13</sup>.

### **1.2.2 Women in Australia**

There is limited research on the impact of climate change on women in developed urban environments. What we do know is that women live longer than men, have less independent financial means, such as superannuation, and comprise the greater number of single parents and primary carers than men. In the face of rising costs, such as water and electricity supply, particular foods and staples, petrol costs and changes to seasonal temperatures, those people who are disadvantaged or are of lower socioeconomic status will be more vulnerable to the impact of climate change<sup>17</sup>.

In Victoria in May 2007, the gender pay gap was 16% (16.2% in Australia)<sup>18</sup>. An Australian Bureau of Statistics report for the same year found that only 6.3% of women who retired from the labour force did so with superannuation or annuity payments, compared with 20% of men<sup>19</sup>. Women are also more likely to retire at a younger age than men<sup>19</sup>, and with a greater average life expectancy, many women will have less superannuation funds to live on over a longer period of time than men.

Women's retirement savings and opportunities for independent and comfortable retirement lifestyles are impacted upon because women generally do not have enough time or money in the paid workforce<sup>20</sup>. The main reason for this is that women remain the primary carer of children and family members<sup>21</sup>. As such, women are far more likely to work part-time or casually than men<sup>21</sup>. In September 2007, the main reason women gave for not being employed was home duties or caring for children. Almost 43% of women, compared to just 6.5% of men, stated this<sup>21</sup>. Equity issues such as these may be magnified due to the effects of climate change, which can cause rising costs in day to day living expenses<sup>22</sup>.

More research is necessary to create a fuller picture of the impact of climate change on urban women. The Women's Environment Network Australia is conducting a survey of Australian women about climate change. The Network will compile the results into an *Australian Women's Declaration on Climate Change* report to be presented to the Government. The aim of this research is to establish the attitudes of Australian women to climate change, any actions women are taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to determine the level of decision making responsibility women have relevant to action on climate change<sup>23</sup>.

One area where this has been done is in the rural sector. As this next section shows, research has revealed the gendered effects of drought on rural women and men.

### **1.2.3 Rural women**

In 2001 a state of drought was declared in most areas of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland<sup>8</sup>. Research in the 1990s revealed the gendered nature of drought experience:

- Women experienced the stresses and hardships caused by drought differently to men;



- Female and male couples who participated in mutual decision-making reported a strengthening of partnership and a sense of support, which contributed to them feeling less overwhelmed;
- Many women experienced a change in roles—for example:
  - Some women who had worked exclusively in the home found that the impact of drought led to cost-saving in employed labour, which they then took over; and,
  - Some women sought work off-farm<sup>24</sup>.

Families were impacted upon by changes in daily routines resulting from women having to take off-farm work<sup>24</sup>. Women in this study reported deep, personal changes because of this situation. For some, their sense of self-esteem was increased as a result of learning new skills and contributing differently. Some reported being able to forget the stress of farm life while at work, the benefit of meeting new people and the enjoyable challenge of learning. For others the difficulty in balancing the housekeeping and off-farm work added to overall stress<sup>24</sup>. The authors of this study said that role changes needed to be better integrated and supported by family members and external agencies, such as counselling services<sup>24</sup>.

In 2008, as part of a national review of the drought policy, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, appointed an expert panel to investigate the social impacts of drought on farm families and rural communities<sup>25</sup>. The panel found similar themes to the research conducted for the 1990s<sup>26</sup>. The panel reported:

- Changes in gender roles, which included:
  - Increases in women seeking off-farm employment,
  - Increased labour contribution to the farm by women and children;
- A social cost to women who had the combined burden of their share of farm work, looking after children and off-farm work;
  - Many women also home-schooled children because of distances to or closure of schools;
- Men's coping strategies often had adverse effects on their families:
  - Women stated that their husband's response to drought and debt was to work harder and longer resulting in a decrease in family communication;
  - Women reported their husband's attitudes to working more as 'stubborn' and unrealistic about their economic situation, while men saw themselves as 'resilient';
- Women reported a sense of isolation due to the cost of fuel and loss of social contacts;
- Women reported having to be emotionally strong to hold the family together;
- Women said they received less support than men;
- Women also talked about the absence of childcare services, which restricted their ability to travel for medical treatment<sup>26</sup>.

The panel found that these changes impacted on women's health, which was further affected by them having to shoulder the emotional burden of the effects of the drought. As a result, many women reported being exhausted and without medical or social support networks to draw on<sup>26</sup>.

The panel noted a large number of health initiatives that had recently focused on the needs of rural men and not women. They stated that it was necessary to recognise and support women's health needs. They also identified a requirement for greater investment in existing primary and allied health care services in rural communities so as to prepare for and be able to respond to the ongoing and future physical and mental health impacts of drought<sup>26</sup>.

#### **1.2.4 Women and bushfires**

Gender as a central organising principle of social life has been overlooked by Australian bushfire researchers<sup>27</sup>. While bushfires are a seasonal threat in Australia, it is likely that the frequency of very high and extreme fire days will increase: up to 25 percent by 2020 and 70 percent by 2050 across south-eastern Australia<sup>8</sup>. What little research there is about the part that gender plays in bushfire situations states that the roles people have within the family unit contribute significantly to how they behave and respond during a crisis<sup>27</sup>. Given the recent Victorian bushfires and the likelihood of increased extreme weather, greater research into the gendered nature of emergency response is required. It is important that women are consulted and that a gender lens is used in all emergency management and policy development.

#### **1.2.5 Low income and disadvantaged women**

Australia is no different to the rest of the world in that climate change is a greater threat to people living in low socio-economic conditions. As stated before, women and children and Indigenous people are among the most at risk<sup>28</sup>. This applies not only to the impact of direct climatic changes but also to mitigation measures:

‘At the [Equity in Response to Climate Change Roundtable 2007](#), Australia's peak environment and welfare groups highlighted that low-income and disadvantaged people will not only be at the forefront of climate change impacts, but also may be disproportionately affected by the adaptation measures designed to minimise the risks associated with climate change. For example, shifting energy sources to low carbon alternatives is likely to increase the use of minimum energy performance standards for electrical appliances, cars and buildings. Pricing carbon into energy means unit costs will rise. The most disadvantaged will struggle to live with increased costs<sup>22</sup>.

Increasing costs associated with water and the drier climate may impact greatly. Upgrading to energy efficient living, installing water tanks and using alternative appliances and transport methods may be beyond the means of low income earners and those financially disadvantaged, or for those who do not have the available knowledge base<sup>17</sup>.

One of the concerns for policy makers is to take into consideration the negative impact that climate change policy may have on low income and vulnerable populations. Not only are these groups—young people, older people, women, low income groups, people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous groups—at greater risk, but a challenge for policy makers will be engaging these populations in actions designed to address climate change. As pressures on individuals and households increase more creative measures will need to be developed to protect these groups and enable them to assist in climate change mitigation<sup>12</sup>.

#### **1.2.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women**

Indigenous people around the world have been declared among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are among these. A 2007 report from Friends of the Earth International states that over 100 000 Aboriginal people live in remote communities that lack infrastructure, health services and employment. With the increasing risk of heat stress, floods, water-borne illnesses and loss of food source, many of Australia's Aboriginal people are at high risk<sup>8</sup>.

The northern areas of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands are particularly vulnerable with rising sea levels already causing an increase in the frequency of high tides and strong winds, resulting in the erosion of beaches, severe sewage system damage, loss of homes, assets and livelihoods<sup>8</sup>.

Serious health risks also exist from tropical diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, as well as heat stress, loss of food sources from floods, drought and increased intense bushfires<sup>8,29</sup>.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission states that climate change has the 'potential to exacerbate inequality and threaten human rights'<sup>28</sup>. Congruent with all populations, the most susceptible to the effects of climate change in Indigenous groups will be women and children who, due to cultural inequities and socioeconomic disadvantages, are generally poorer and less resourced.

While rising sea levels and floods will be an issue, so too will drought, changes in rainfall patterns and the threat of fire. The value placed on water by Australia's Indigenous people put them at greater risk, particularly those in the northern areas of Australia. Traditional environment-related knowledge is also under threat<sup>28</sup>.

The impact of reduced water access may serve to increase the marginalisation of Indigenous women in Australia<sup>28</sup>. The receding of riverbeds means a disruption and threat to aspects of women's business<sup>28</sup>. Women in some Indigenous groups are concerned that activities such as basket weaving, which requires water in the cultivation of the grasses, are in jeopardy. The absence of seasonal floods, combined with water management restrictions, impact on this aspect of women's cultural economy<sup>28</sup>.

### **1.3 Climate change, disaster and violence**

Increased frequency of severe weather patterns will see increased risk of natural disaster, which can create conditions that influence the perpetration of violence. While the World Health Organisation (WHO) states that research into post-disaster violence rates is limited and come mainly from the United States<sup>30</sup>, there are known effects of disasters on violence, both immediate and long term. The WHO says these could include:

- Increased stress and feelings of powerlessness due to bereavement, loss of property and loss of livelihood;
- Mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder;
- The scarcity of basic provisions;
- Destruction of social networks;
- Breakdown of law enforcement;
- Cessation of violence prevention and other social support programs; and,
- Disruptions to the economy<sup>30</sup>.

The recent Victorian bushfires could have resulted in some of these effects. For this reason advocacy and support groups included violence support information in the general relief information that was disseminated during and after the fires<sup>iii</sup>.

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<sup>iii</sup> For example: Bushfire Legal Support: 'Accommodation and Support Services in Victoria' - *Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service*: [http://www.bushfirelegalhelp.org.au/cb\\_pages/accommodation\\_support\\_services.php](http://www.bushfirelegalhelp.org.au/cb_pages/accommodation_support_services.php); Women's Health Victoria's Clearinghouse Connector - February 2009 Special Edition: *Victorian Bushfires &*

The WHO reports that intimate partner violence and sexual violence increase in places where natural disasters have occurred<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, women who were subjected to violence prior to the disaster are more likely to experience increased violence after it<sup>30</sup>. Matters are made worse because women may be separated from family, friends and other potential support and protective systems<sup>30</sup>.

## 2. Policy Context and Challenges

### 2.1 Global context

One of the primary international organising bodies around gender and climate change is the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA). The Alliance is comprised of the Women's Environment Development Organisation (WEDO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Environment Program. Its role is to help 'ensure that climate change policies, decision-making, initiatives at the global, regional and national levels are gender responsive'.

In March of 2009 at the 53<sup>rd</sup> United Nations Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, the GGCA called to action governments and organisations on gender and climate change<sup>iv</sup>. The call included:

1. Incorporate gender considerations in the new agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
2. Request the UNFCCC Secretariat to undertake a gender mainstreaming process that is fully integrated in the Secretariat's programmes, assistance to the Parties, and cooperation with financing mechanisms;
3. Ensure that national climate change and disaster risk reduction measures, such as the National Adaptation Programmes of Action, are gender responsive and comply with international human rights frameworks;
4. Enable the participation and voice of women leaders, gender experts, women from local and indigenous communities, and women's affairs ministries in climate change and related decision-making processes, programmes and projects at community, national, regional and international levels;
5. Integrate gender-sensitive criteria in financial mechanisms supporting climate change adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, technology transfer, and disaster risk reduction measures, and prioritize the funding of women's entrepreneurial activities and innovations that advance gender equality and women's empowerment;
6. Allocate sufficient resources to enhance the capacity of women at all levels; and,
7. Ensure that data collected by governments, international organisations, and financial institutions are sex-disaggregated<sup>31</sup>.

The GGCA's call to action is a response to the significant global policy gap in relation to women's rights and climate change<sup>15</sup>, particularly in developing countries, many of which are the more susceptible to the effects of climate change. Unfortunately, similar gaps also exist within Australian policy on climate change.

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*Disaster Situations-Domestic Violence:* <http://www.whv.org.au/publications-resources/clearinghouse-connectors> ; also *Victoria Bushfires and Disaster Recovery:* <http://www.whv.org.au/>

<sup>iv</sup> For a full version of the call to action see the Women's Environment and Development Organisation website at: <http://www.wedo.org/category/learn/campaigns/climatechange>

## 2.2 Current Australian context

While the Australian Government is active in responsibilities to climate change nationally and in the global arena, it appears that its policies, programs and publications are gender blind.

The *Garnaut Climate Change Review* was presented to the Australian Government in September of 2008<sup>32</sup>. Conducted by Professor Ross Garnaut the *Final Report* does not take gender into consideration. The terms of reference set out for the review were very specific and centred around economic and cost factors<sup>v</sup>. Gender was obviously not a consideration in the development of terms of reference, and this was reflected in the final report.

Within Australia, state governments are taking their own action, as shown in the next section on Victoria. Individual scholars and independent organisations are also advocating for the inclusion of gender in national policy decisions around climate change<sup>vi</sup>.

### 2.2.1 Victorian context

The Victorian Government considered gender in the impact of climate change on the rural environment. In October 2006, the Victorian Government introduced its Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change initiative<sup>33</sup>. This was part of a strategy to support the needs of women in rural and regional areas. The initiative has included:

- The Rural Women's network—a conduit for linking rural women's groups and disseminating information, which involves:
  - A series of regional gatherings to discuss drought and climate change from a rural women's perspective;
  - A networking newsletter;
  - Initiatives around accessibility and inclusion for rural women with disabilities<sup>33</sup>; and,
- Community engagement officers<sup>34</sup>.

Community Engagement Officers-Women and Drought have been employed in five rural regions in Victoria. They are responsible for:

- Building networks and support knowledge sharing across regions;
- Increasing interaction and involvement between individuals and community groups;
- Building relationships within and across communities and organisations;
- Planning for the future;
- Building on local strengths and assets; and,
- Identifying opportunities for new and improved links to drought information<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>v</sup> See the Terms of Reference for the Garnaut report at:  
[http://www.garnautreview.org.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/Garnaut/garnautweb.nsf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/domino/Web_Notes/Garnaut/garnautweb.nsf)

<sup>vi</sup> For example see: Sisters on the Planet: <http://www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/climate-change/take-action/sisters-on-the-planet/>; Women's Environment Network Australia: <http://wena.org.au/dp/>; UNIFEM Australia Gender and climate change: <http://www.unifem.org.au/node/211>; also see '1 million women', a campaign to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by women: <http://www.1millionwomen.com.au/index.cfm?ruuid=9F332D32-BA86-7920-64FEBA363EABB5CE> The campaign is organised by Climate Coolers and is a women-led initiative.

The focus will also be on connecting rural women to state and local government agencies involved in drought and climate change responses<sup>34</sup>.

One of the ways that the Australian Government can expand on the example of the Victorian Government's work with rural women around climate change is to widely adopt a gender framework. This is outlined in detail in the next section.

### **2.3 Gender framework**

The absence of gender literacy around climate change in Australia indicates a large gap in the area<sup>1</sup>. A human rights perspective is a basic starting point, but it is not the complete picture. Beyond using a human rights lens, a gender lens must also be employed in order to illuminate and address the multiple ways climate change is gendered.

A gender analysis framework is a tool that encourages the development of policy to take account of and be responsive to gender.

It is predicated upon the following:

- All policies have an impact on women and men;
- Policies and programs affect women and men differently; and,
- Diversity exists between individual women and men and within groups of women and men

The framework can help identify, understand and address the various areas of climate change management, including policy, adaptation measures and disaster responses, to take into consideration the multiple ways climate change is gendered. The framework consists of three elements:

- Gendered data: gender disaggregated statistics can be used pro-actively in planning and are critical in gauging the extent to which women and men benefit or are affected by policy;
- Gender impact assessment: monitor new and existing policies for gender impact and use knowledge to adapt existing or proposed policies to promote gender equity in both planning and implementation; and,
- Gender awareness raising: take opportunities to build capacity and understanding of how policies and programs can cause or lead to discriminatory effects.

## **3. Conclusion**

The gendered nature of global warming must be incorporated into responses to climate change. This paper has highlighted the multiple ways that gender difference and gender inequities place the burden of climate change on women. While the psychosocial effects of disasters are experienced by both women and men, women more often have the increased responsibility of family care and attending to multiple workloads. Their carer-role continues despite that they may be in great distress themselves. This is exacerbated by limited support.

This paper has shown that the impact of climate change of women's health requires further investigation. Policy gaps and policies that are currently gender blind need to be addressed. Opportunities as well as inequities, including gender-based violence in disaster situations, cannot be identified or managed without taking a gendered approach to climate change.

As Australia takes steps towards mitigating the effects of climate change for our continent, and attends to our global responsibility, governments and policy makers need to acknowledge the research available about gender difference and gender inequities, and apply a gender lens to current and future climate change management.

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