

CONVERSATION GUIDE:

HOW TO TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND BUSHFIRE RISK

Climate pollution from burning coal, oil and gas is supercharging our atmosphere and fuelling more ferocious fire weather. We're all paying a price for that. So, how can we talk about this?

FIND COMMON VALUES:

Australians care deeply about protecting their homes, families and communities.

Begin conversations over shared values, such as:

- The importance of keeping communities safer
- A love of the outdoors
- Protecting our favourite places

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For example:



We both love living in our homes near bushland, and enjoy the walks through nature with our families. Our kids love spotting birds and wildlife on these walks.

Climate pollution from burning coal, oil and gas, is increasing bushfire risk and threatening places like this. We need to cut climate pollution further and faster to protect what we love.

BE ARMED WITH FACTS:

There's a lot of reliable information on climate change and bushfires you can share with others.

Point people to trustworthy sources of information (like Australia's national science agency [CSIRO](#), or the [Climate Council](#)) and refer to one or two clear facts that are easy to remember.

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For example:



- Climate pollution has turbocharged fire conditions - making fires more dangerous and unpredictable.
- Large parts of Australia, especially the south, are facing more days of extreme fire weather and larger, more damaging fires due to climate pollution.



EMPATHY IS KEY:

Many Australians have lived experience of bushfires, and feel anxious about climate change.

It's important to speak with empathy. Listen actively, respond with care and acknowledge how someone might be feeling. Where appropriate, make sure people are aware of solutions and progress.

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For example:



I hear you – bushfires are frightening, and all this can feel overwhelming. You're not alone in feeling concerned about increased fire risk fuelled by climate pollution from coal, oil and gas.

What gives me hope is solutions that are underway, like the rise of clean energy. Our electricity system is now powered by more than 40% renewable energy. Reducing climate pollution helps lower future fire risk.

AVOID FALSE DEBATES:

There's a lot of misleading information out there on climate change and bushfires.

Scientists are clear on the link between global heating and intensifying bushfire risk. It's often best not to repeat myths, as this can unintentionally spread them.

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But when needed:



Below, are clear, evidence-based responses we've compiled to common myths that you can use.



MYTHBUSTING:

SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION ON CLIMATE-FUELLED BUSHFIRE RISK

Use these evidence-based responses if
misinformation arises.

FACT: CLIMATE POLLUTION IS MAKING BUSHFIRES MORE DANGEROUS.

Myth: There's "no evidence" climate change is affecting bushfires.

Burning coal, oil and gas has overheated our planet, increasing the number of high-risk fire days, lengthening fire seasons, and creating hotter, drier conditions that allow fires to spread faster and burn more intensely.

Australia's leading experts — including at CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, Climate Council, and Emergency Leaders for Climate Action — all agree on this.

FACT: HOW A FIRE STARTS MATTERS FAR LESS THAN THE CONDITIONS IT BURNS IN.

Myth: Certain fires were bad "because of arson, not climate change".

Fires can begin in many ways — but climate pollution is worsening fire weather, so fires are now spreading faster and becoming harder to control.

Hotter, drier and windier conditions mean small ignitions can escalate quickly. In the past, many fires were easier to contain.

Today's fire conditions make that far less likely.

FACT: AUSTRALIA HAS ALWAYS HAD FIRES, BUT NOT THE CATASTROPHIC FIRE CONDITIONS OF TODAY.

Myth: This is nothing new because Australia has always had bushfires

Fire seasons start earlier, run longer, and we're now facing more extreme fire days. Conditions have worsened so much that a new category of 'catastrophic' fire danger was created after Victoria's Black Saturday in 2009. Rainforests in Far North Queensland and Tasmania burnt in 2019/20 for the first time in recorded history.

This new fire reality costs all of us, including through higher insurance premiums and ongoing community recovery.

FACT: CLIMATE CHANGE IS ROBBING FIREFIGHTERS OF SAFE OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE FUEL LOADS.

Myth: It's not about climate, it's a fuel load issue that hazard reduction burns can solve.

Hazard reduction burning is important, but it can only be done safely under the right conditions – and climate change is shrinking those windows. It is often too wet, or too hot, or too windy to safely do burns. Even where hazard reduction has occurred, extreme fire weather can allow fires to jump containment lines and burn through treated areas.

Climate pollution is rewriting the traditional rules of firefighting.

FACT: CLIMATE POLLUTION MAKES DROUGHTS AND HEATWAVES MORE DANGEROUS.

Myth: Droughts, heatwaves or El Niño vs climate change are the real issue.

Australia's leading climate agencies, including the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, have found that climate pollution is driving hotter heatwaves and longer dry periods. Natural climate cycles still influence fire risk, but they now operate on a much hotter baseline.

By supercharging fire conditions, climate pollution is creating the perfect conditions for fires to intensify and spread.

FACT: MORE BUSHFIRES ANYWHERE MEAN HIGHER INSURANCE COSTS EVERYWHERE.

Myth : My home isn't at risk, so bushfires aren't my problem.

As bushfire risk rises, premiums increase, excesses rise, and insurance becomes harder or more expensive to access — even for people far from the fire front. Since 2020 insurance premiums have increased by 78% to 138% for homes in bushfire-prone areas within Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Millions of Australians live on the fringes of our major capital cities, and are at risk of urban fires.

Bushfires also result in power outages, smoke and health impacts and disaster recovery spending that all Australians pay for.

FACT: CLIMATE CHANGE IS STRETCHING FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES WORLDWIDE.

Myth: Australia can always rely on global firefighting support.

Fire seasons are lengthening across the globe, meaning multiple regions can face severe fires at the same time. This reduces access to shared resources like aircraft and specialist crews.

Australia needs strong domestic firefighting capability, alongside international cooperation.

FACT: WHAT WE DO NOW DIRECTLY AFFECTS FUTURE FIRE RISK.

Myth: What we do now won't make a difference

Every tonne of climate pollution avoided helps limit how severe fire conditions become. Faster action means fewer days of extreme fire weather and lower risks for communities. We must also invest heavily in disaster preparation and community resilience at all levels of government so we're as prepared as possible for the worsening fire risks we already face.

The choices made today are shaping how dangerous future summers will be.