

Donors help reopen axed Australian climate watchdog

September 24 2013



A bushfire burns out of control in the Kiewa Valley, Australia, on February 10, 2009.

An independent Australian climate change watchdog axed last week by the country's new conservative government was resurrected Tuesday as a non-profit body funded by public donations.

Formerly known as the Climate Commission, the rebranded Climate

Council will continue public information campaigns about the science of [climate change](#), emissions targets and international action.

"Make no mistake, we're in the middle of a Titanic struggle, indeed I think that the fight for a clean and safe environmental future is reaching its peak," Tim Flannery, who previously headed the commission, said.

"The resistance and the disinformation just keep growing. That's why we are here today."

The body was dumped last week by new Prime Minister Tony Abbott—who once described the science behind man-made climate change as "absolute crap"—in a bid to find savings and trim the civil service.

Flannery said a huge groundswell of public support for the commission had prompted him to resurrect the watchdog as a publicly-funded operation, with donations pouring in at a rate of Aus\$1,000 (US\$940) per hour since midnight.

"Over the last week we've really been blown away by offers of support and donations," Flannery said.



Scientists monitor reef sharks in a picture handout by the Australian Institute of Marine Science, on September 19, 2013.

"Most people told us to keep going and they really appreciated our reports and information, in fact many of them found our work vital to what they do."

Flannery said the nation's fire and rescue services needed to be prepared for increasing danger, particularly in the south-east, where the devastating 2009 Black Saturday inferno killed 173 people and razed entire villages, while hospitals and medical services ought to brace for more frequent and intense [heatwaves](#).

Rising sea levels would pose a real threat of inundation to Australians, more than 85 percent of whom live near the coast, and farmers needed to be informed about changing [rainfall patterns](#), he added.

Flannery said the new council would operate with much the same mandate as the previous commission, which was established by the previous Labor government in 2011 to provide reliable information on climate issues.

The commissioners would initially volunteer their time to get the council off the ground while capital was being raised "Obama-style in small donations online from the public, from ordinary Australians".

"It will be a fiercely independent and apolitical body focused on providing the facts," Flannery said.

Australia, which is among the world's worst per capita polluters due to

its reliance on coal-fired power and mining exports, has just experienced its warmest 12 months on record.

Its last summer, the hottest ever recorded, witnessed an unprecedented heatwave, bushfires and floods.

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