

Climate change is killing our trees

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Forest dieback caused by an extreme drought and multiple heatwaves in 2010 and early 2011 in the Northern Jarrah Forest region in south west Western Australia. Photo: George Matusick, May 2011

Climate change and extreme climatic events appear to be killing trees around the world.

In a report released by the Ecological Society of Australia, Dr Niels Brouwers from Murdoch University's Centre of Excellence for Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health (CECCWFH), and [colleagues](#), suggest these changes in climate are also reducing [tree growth](#) and health.

"In Western Australia we found that more than 25% of mature trees across 7000 hectares of forest died in response to extreme drought and

multiple heatwaves in 2010-11," said Dr Brouwers.

"We saw similar numbers of trees dying in arid areas of Queensland in response to the 2003-07 drought, and there are similar reports from around the world."

"It is of enormous concern that more frequent extreme climate events such as droughts and heatwaves are projected for Australia and other parts of the world in the near future. We can expect to see further deterioration of our woodlands and forests."

"Tree declines also affect the animals dependent upon them," added Dr Brouwers. "For instance, already vulnerable Australian Glossy Black-cockatoos have fewer offspring during droughts because food, such as she-oak cones, are harder to find."

Climate change may also reduce the ability of trees to sequester carbon. "The role of forests in sucking carbon out of the atmosphere is well known. But if [trees](#) die more rapidly and are not replaced due to climate change, this critical ecosystem service is threatened."

"There is an urgent need for more monitoring of [climate change](#) impacts on the world's forests," added Dr Brouwers.

More information: Climate Change: trees under pressure.
[www.ecolsoc.org.au/hot-topics/ ... trees-under-pressure](http://www.ecolsoc.org.au/hot-topics/...trees-under-pressure)

Provided by Murdoch University

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