

Who has the most to lose from climate change in your country?

As the driest inhabited continent, with a history of devastating drought, floods, fire and tropical cyclones, Australia has more to lose than most countries from climate change. The most populated areas of Australia are becoming drier, heatwaves and extreme fire weather are increasing, and storms are becoming more intense. Australia's people, economy and iconic ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu will all lose under a changing climate. Yet Australia's political response to climate change has lagged behind many other countries. Australia was one of the last countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, recently removed its newly established price on carbon, and lacks a credible policy to achieve even the modest emission reductions it has pledged.

This ineffective political response serves to reveal who really has the most to lose from climate change in Australia: the powerful mining companies that thrive by digging up our vast reserves of fossil fuels and shipping them to the world; and the politicians that back them. If the world is to respond effectively to climate change, most of Australia's coal and gas needs to stay in the ground, unburnt. Fossil fuel companies face huge losses as the global divestment movement takes hold and the renewable energy boom continues. This unpalatable truth has led mining companies and their political supporters to resist climate action at every turn, so far with great success. However, they are on the wrong side of history and will eventually lose as demand for their damaging products declines.