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# Record temperatures for March a warning of what's to come, say experts

- Caitlin Guilfoyle

Record-breaking autumn heat is just a warning of what's to come if Australia doesn't act immediately to combat climate change.

That's the message from environmental experts armed with a report that reveals a notable climb in average temperatures across the country at the start of March.

Figures reveal the overall average maximum temperature for the first four days of March was four degrees higher than average, with some places up to 12C hotter.

This summer has also witnessed a record 39 straight days above 26C in Sydney and the hottest ever March Melbourne night of 27.7C.

Feeling the heat: The first four days of March were at least four degrees hotter than average. Photo: Leigh Henningham

Climate Council chief executive Amanda McKenzie says Australia is now experiencing the consequences of climate change, moving past the time for mere concern.

Average global temperatures could be four to six degrees warmer by the end of the century if nothing is done, Ms McKenzie said.

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"That is something we just don't want to imagine," she said at the launch of the Climate Council's report, Heat Marches On, on Sunday.

"At the moment we're not even at one degree warming globally and we've seen such huge changes.

"It would be an unimaginable change for human civilisation."

Hot days like those this month put Australia's health at risk, as the vulnerable struggle to cope and bushfires are fuelled by warm conditions, Ms McKenzie said.

She said reef tourism operators were also affected by widespread coral bleaching in the Great Barrier Reef, triggered by elevated sea surface temperatures.

"We're seeing the impact in our daily lives around Australia."

"We need to move rapidly away from fossil fuels, coal, oil and gas which are driving climate change and move to more renewable energy."

Professor Tim Flannery said temperatures would become less extreme as the current El Nino cycle began to fade, but the next would be even hotter.

Conditions over the last few months had been unprecedented and inaction from Australia was "quite disgraceful".

State and federal governments must take action, with policies to remove sources of pollution and build cleaner energy systems, Professor Flannery said.

"We've come through the Paris meeting where the world has agreed on action," he said.

"We've had three months in Australia where nothing has happened, but we got the announcement that emissions from the burning of fossil fuels have grown."

## **THE HEAT IS ON**

Maximum temperature at least 4C above average, from March 1 to 4

- Temps 8 to 12C above average for most of southeast Australia
- Record 39 straight days over 26C in Sydney
- Perth had more 40C days this summer than ever before
- Melbourne had hottest March night on record, at peak of 38.6C
- Canberra had 10 straight days of 30C or more
- Echuca, VIC, and Tocumwal, NSW, sweltered through eight straight days of 38C or more in March, breaking records for any month of the year
- Temperature records shattered around the world, with this January and February hotter than any other.

(Source: Climate Council)

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