

Thank you for this opportunity for me to express my views as a concerned citizen.

I think it's great that the Government is thinking carefully about how it can better respond to disasters. But I would really like to stress that I don't think we're doing enough as a society to prepare for low-probability but catastrophic events. To name just a few:

- A nuclear winter arising from an exchange of nuclear weapons
- Crop failure due to volcanic eruptions blotting out the sun
- Damage to critical infrastructure from geomagnetic storms

It is tempting to think that many of these events are too unlikely to be worth worrying about, but I believe that is a mistake. The latter two events have certainly happened before and with a long enough time horizon, they are exceedingly likely to happen again.

The threat of nuclear war may also seem distant with the passing of the cold war. But with the war in Ukraine, I think we have seen that really the risk has never gone away, and any number of events in the future could cause the risk to increase to the level it was at during the cold war or even beyond (a confrontation over Taiwan is one possibility).

Alongside a focus on more 'run-of-the-mill' disasters such as bushfires and floods, I would like to see the government take action to plan ahead as to how we might respond to mitigate damage and save Australian lives if any of these low-probability events were to occur.

Australia has of course just emerged from one of these events. Pandemics had only just recently seemed too unlikely to worry about. But the COVID-19 pandemic really brought home that it is all too easy to be lulled into a false sense of security regarding these kinds of events. In reality though, the risks are all too real.

I urge you: if you're looking at a 0.001% risk of a really bad thing happening, don't round that probability down to 0. Instead, prepare for it. Consider it as part of a portfolio of risks both large and small.

Many thanks for your consideration.