



Climate statement stokes ETS debate

Steven Scott

Australia experienced the second-hottest year on record in 2009, according to new data the Bureau of Meteorology says is consistent with global warming.

The bureau's 2009 annual climate statement, released yesterday, showed the annual mean temperature across Australia was 0.9 degrees Celsius higher than the 1961-90 average.

NSW, Victoria and South Australia recorded their hottest temperatures on record for the July to December period.

The figures show the past decade to be the hottest in Australia since reliable records began in 1910, in a finding that accords with a World Meteorological Organisation declaration last month that the decade to 2009 was the warmest on record around the globe.

"There are clear upward trends in the number of hot events and downward trends in the number of cold events [over the period 1960 to date], consistent with global warming," the bureau's climate statement said.

"In Australia, each decade since the 1940s has been warmer than the preceding decade."

The federal government claims the findings give greater weight to its plans for an emissions trading scheme, which it will attempt to pass through parliament in February, despite the bill already being rejected twice and being opposed by both the coalition and the

Australian Greens. Environment Minister Peter Garrett said the latest climate data disproved claims by Opposition Leader Tony Abbott last month that "the world's warming has stopped".

Mr Abbott said yesterday that the government's planned emissions trading scheme would not address climate change.

"My argument isn't with the meteorologists, my argument is with the government. My argument is against the government's great big new tax," Mr Abbott said.

"If we are going to tackle climate change, let's take direct action, let's not raise the price of ordinary daily life."

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Bureau of Meteorology

Extreme heatwaves across southern Australia in January and February last year saw new maximum temperatures of 46.6C recorded in Melbourne, a new Victorian state record of 48.8C at Hopetoun and a Tasmanian record of 42.2C at Scamander, the annual climate statement showed.

Rainfall was slightly less than long-term averages last year, with a mean reading of 453 millimetres across the country.