

Western Port Biosphere Reserve

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CEO

Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation



Western Port Biosphere



Inspiring the future by connecting
people with nature today.

Acknowledgement of Country



I'd like to acknowledge the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we're meeting today.

First Nations peoples are the original caretakers of the land and waterways and hold the truth, the stories, and the knowledge necessary for creating a sustainable future. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.



What is a Biosphere reserve?

- Biosphere reserves are ‘learning places for sustainable development’.
- Balancing conservation and development



**Western Port
Biosphere**



UNESCO's global Biosphere network

784

RESERVES

142

COUNTRIES

5%

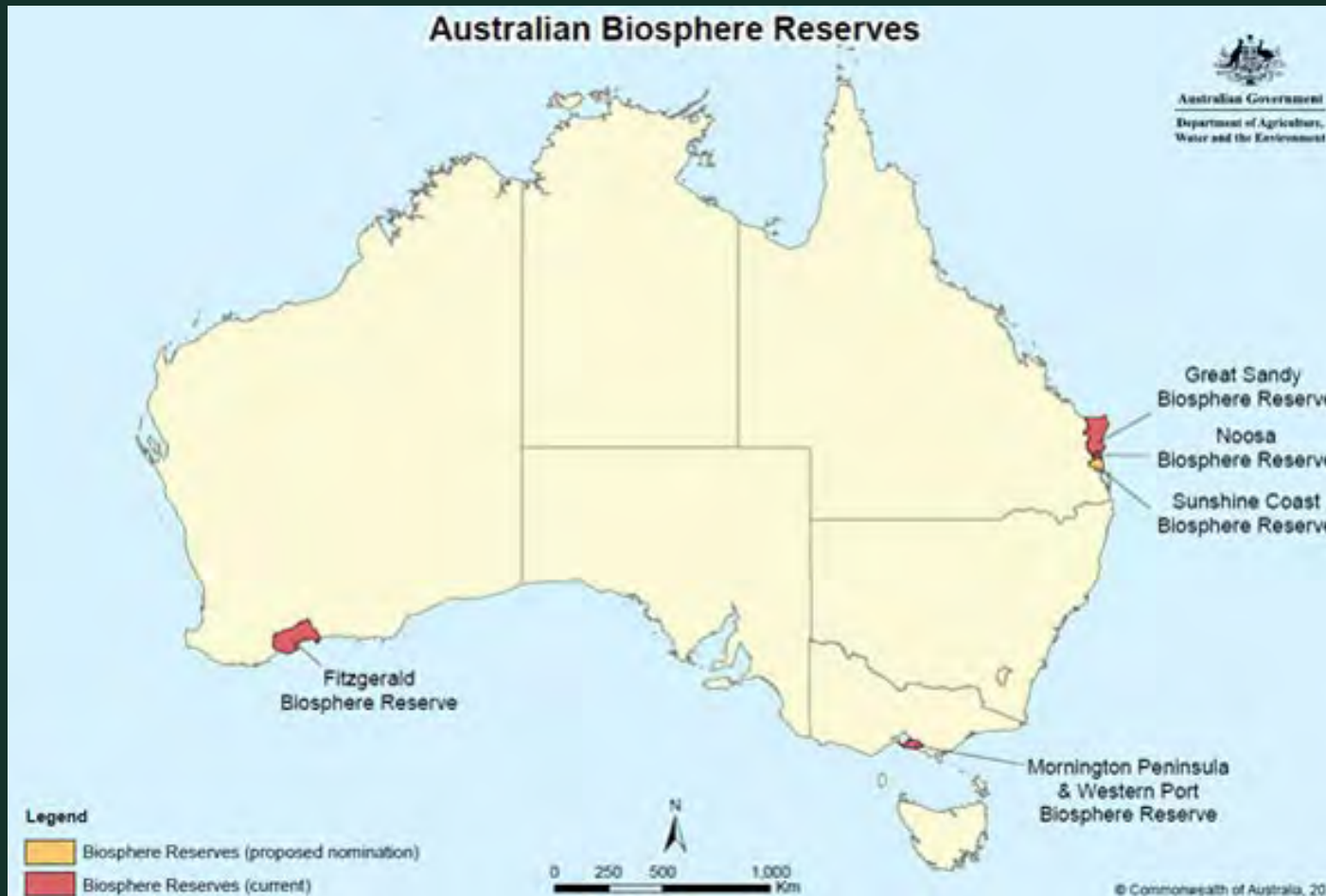
WORLD'S
LAND AREA

300

MILLION
PEOPLE

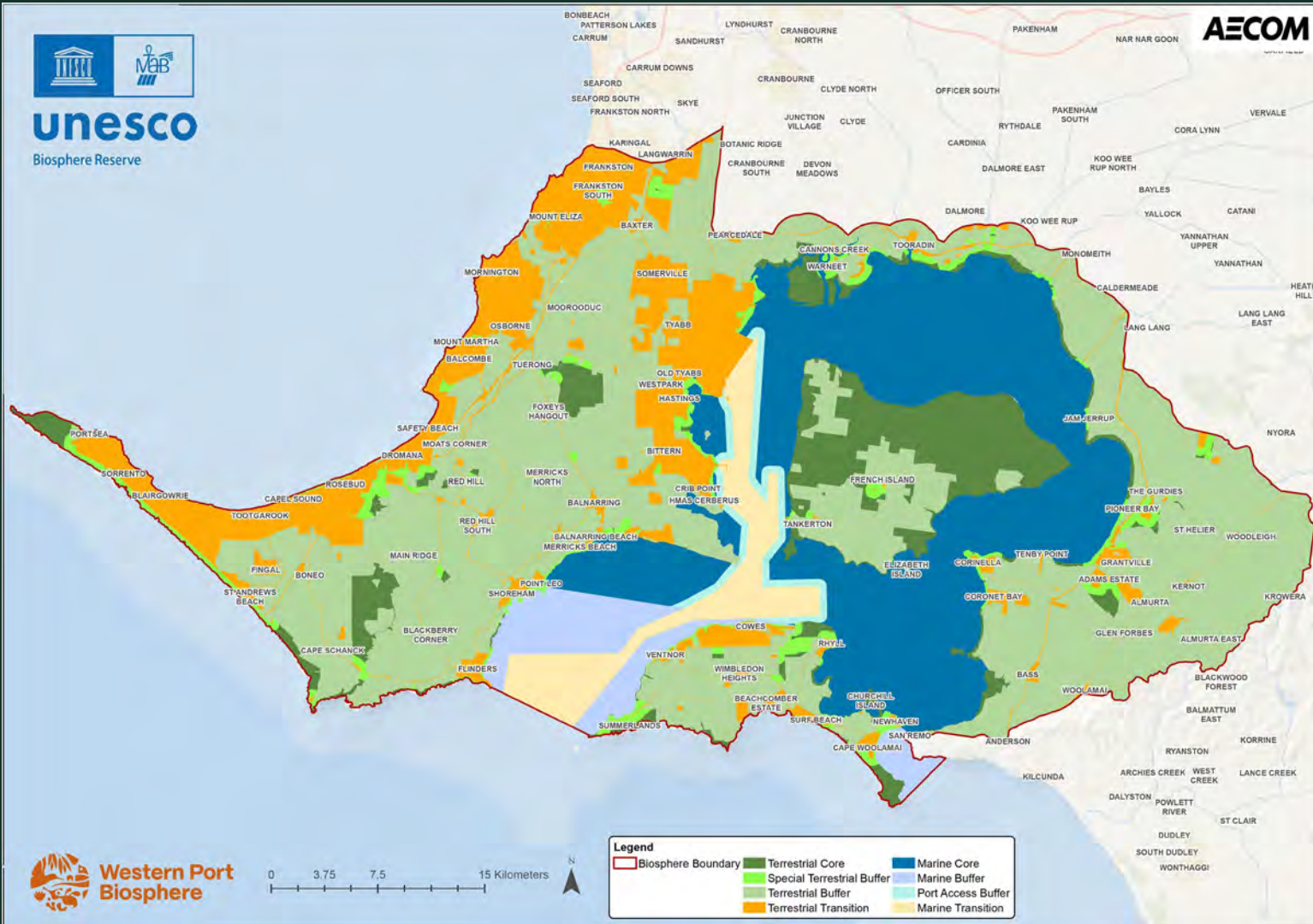


Only 5 Biospheres in Australia!



Western Port the only
UNESCO Biosphere in
the south-east

Our Biosphere Reserve



Recertified until 2032

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

A snapshot of our Biosphere

- Native and introduced fauna **1314 species** (of which 222 are threatened)
- Native and introduced flora **2400 species** (of which 104 are threatened)
- 1 of 12** Ramsar Internationally Important Wetlands in Victoria
- 30%** of the biosphere reserve area is protected

Why Western Port?

- It has outstanding natural values and a large human population
- It is an area of great biological diversity due to its unusually wide range of habitat types. These range from deep channels to seagrass meadows, mangroves, saltmarsh and melaleuca thickets.
- It supports a large number of marine invertebrates and about 65% of Victoria's bird species.





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Biosphere**



We are globally significant

1. Recognised by the United Nations (via UNESCO) as being part of a Biosphere Reserve due to its outstanding natural values
2. A Ramsar wetland of International Importance
3. World-class blue carbon assets
4. Bryozoan reef of global significance



Biosphere Foundation

Our Purpose

*Inspire a positive future by
connecting people and nature today*

- Biosphere Foundation established in 2003
- Skills based Board



Our Strategic Priorities

- Tackle climate change and biodiversity loss within the Biosphere Reserve
- Leverage the global significance of the Biosphere Reserve and the UNESCO brand to inspire action
- Attract investment to ensure the long-term health of the Biosphere Reserve



Our pillars

This select group of the internationally recognised UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the foundation upon which we focus our work

Climate Action



Environment Preservation and Restoration



Sustainable Development



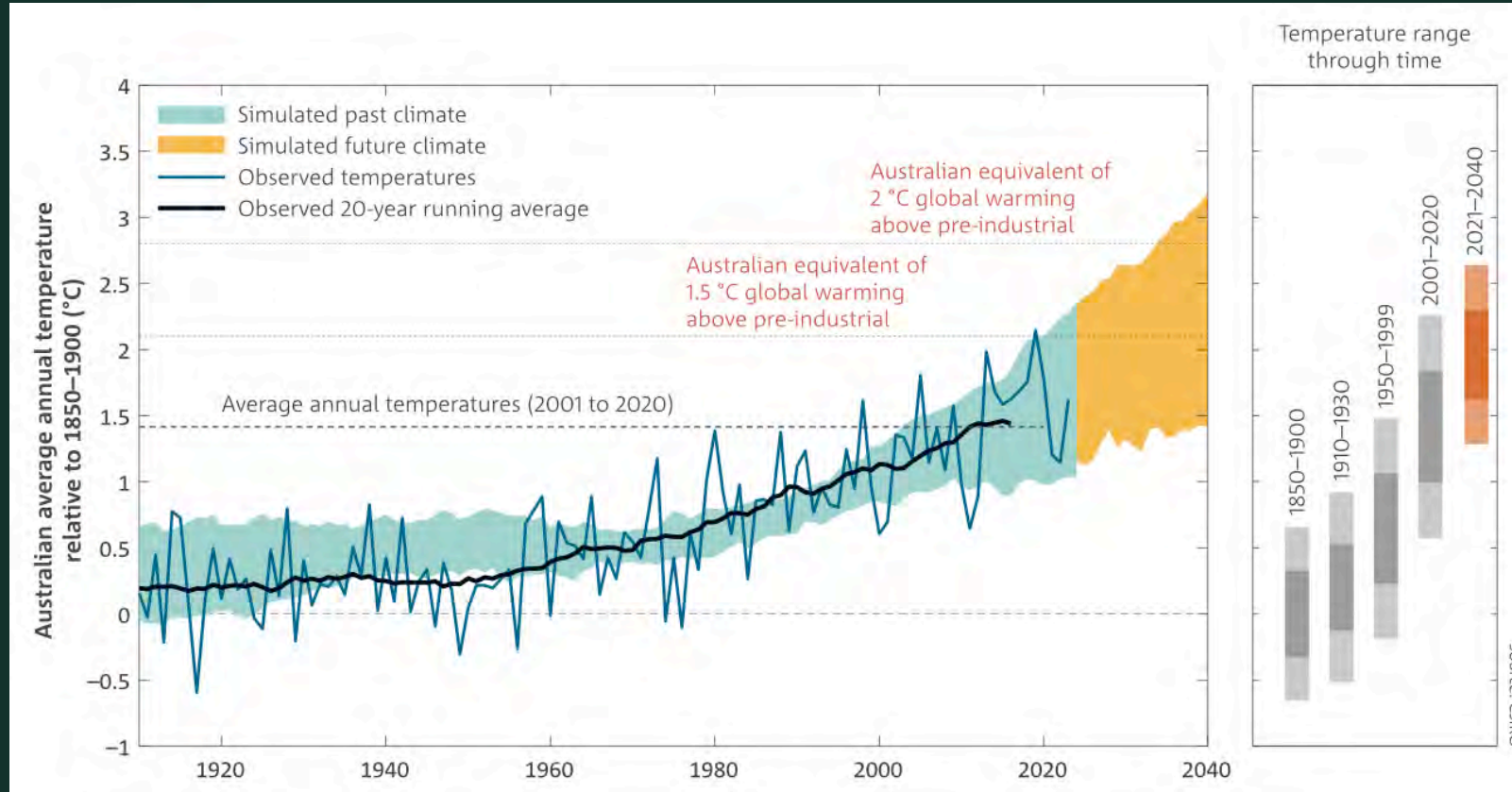
How we work



Temperatures are rising



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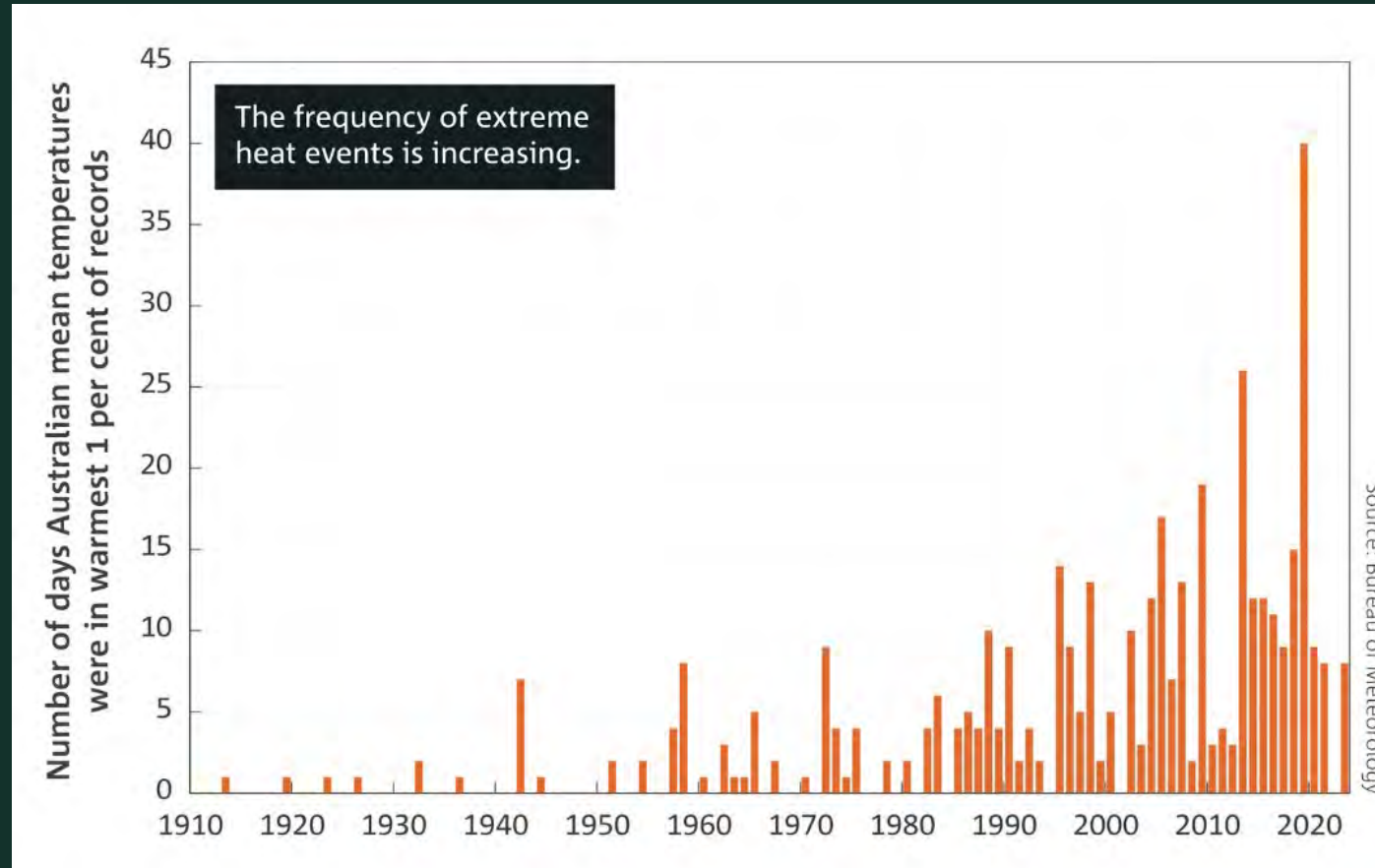


State of the Climate Report 2024 – CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology

Extremely hot days are becoming more frequent



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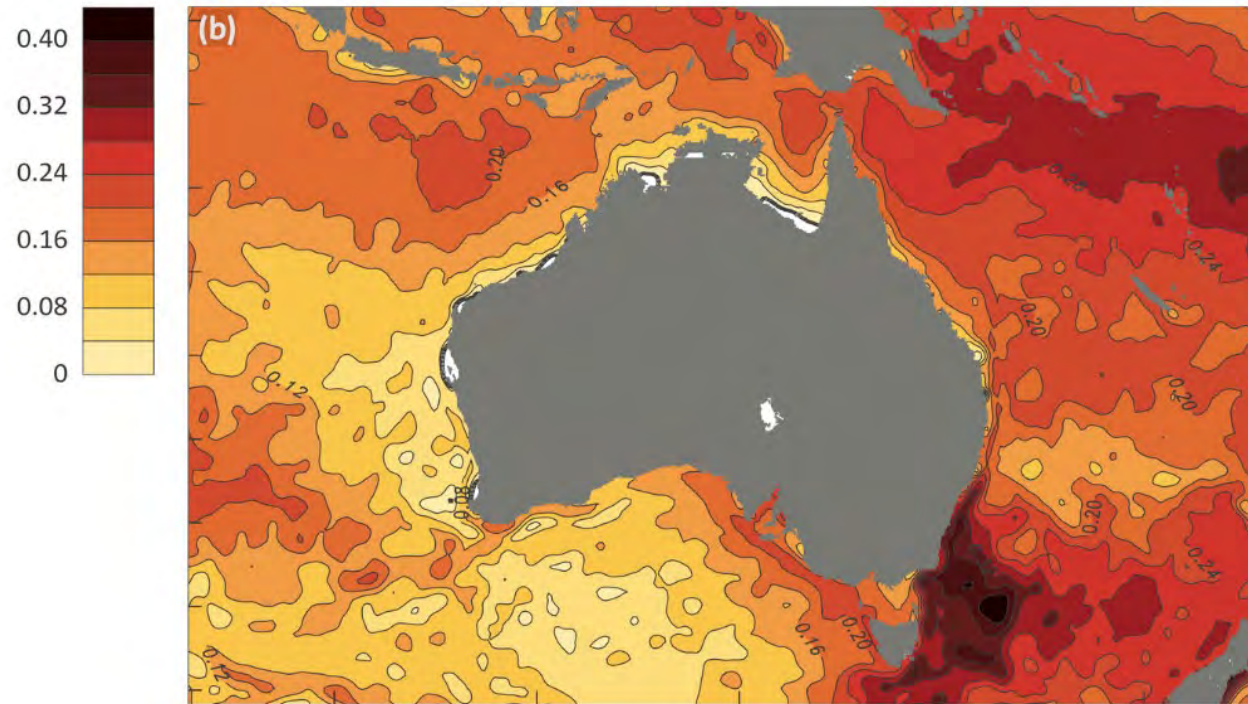


Oceans are warming



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Trends in sea
surface temperature
(°C per decade)

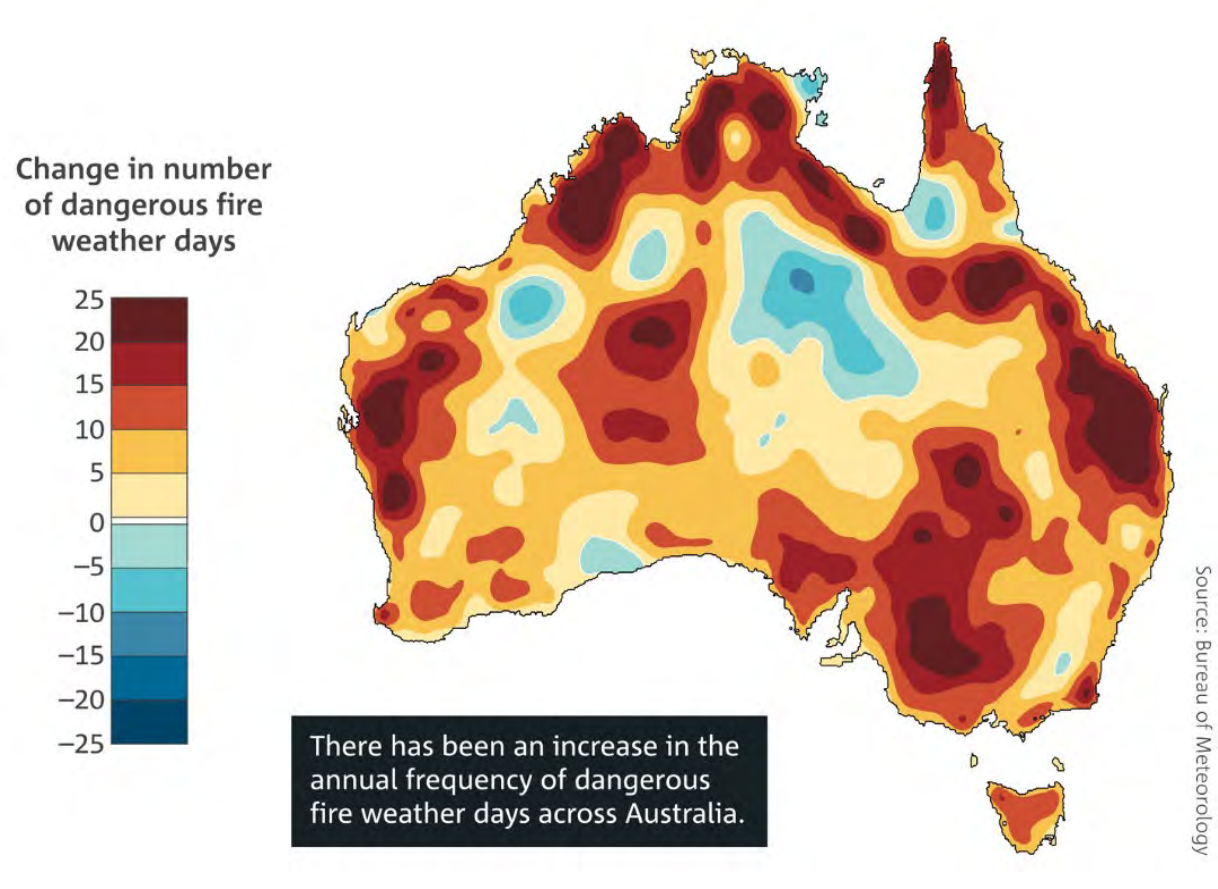


Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Bushfire risk is worsening



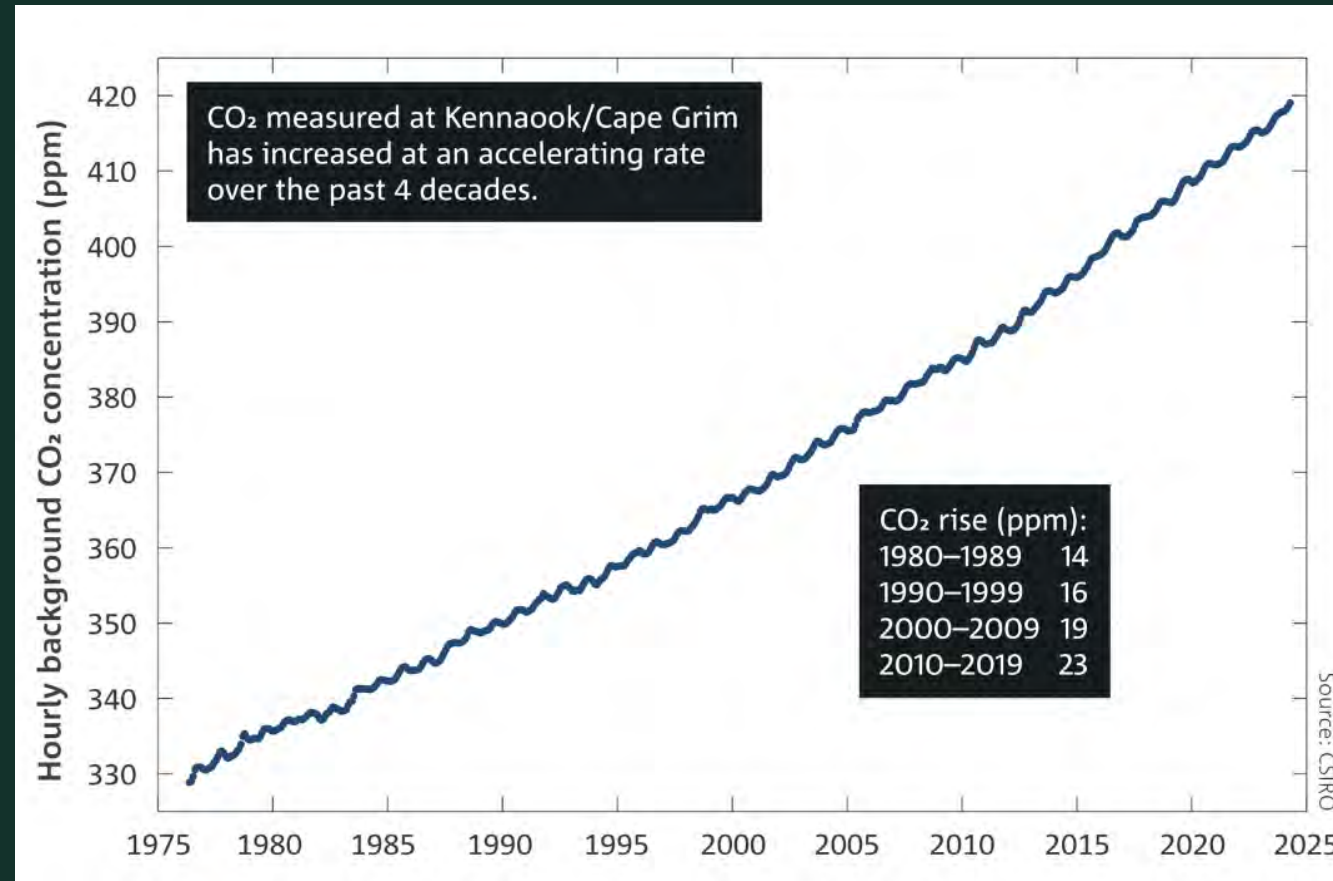
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Greenhouse gas emissions are increasing



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What we do



DELIVER PROJECTS



PARTNERSHIPS



ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

Blue Carboncoastal biolinks



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unesco
Biosphere Reserve



The Ian Potter
Foundation



RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Centre for Nature
Positive Solutions

COASTAL WETLANDS UNDER THREAT

Global wetlands have declined by 64-71% since 1900. This dramatic decline has significant impacts on carbon storage. It is estimated that each hectare of blue carbon ecosystem lost has an equivalent impact of losing between 10 and 40 hectares of tropical forest in terms of carbon emissions, mostly due to the extremely long-term storage of carbon in blue carbon soils.



Understanding the value of

COASTAL WETLANDS



SALTMARSH



MANGROVES



SEAGRASS

Mangroves, saltmarsh, and seagrasses – are collectively known as 'blue carbon' ecosystems. They act as natural carbon sinks, effectively reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change. Blue carbon systems can drawdown carbon 30-50 times faster than terrestrial forests and lock it away in the soil for centuries to millennia. Australia is home to one of the world's richest blue carbon stores.

Koala Corridor Project

Partnership with Moonlit Sanctuary
Wildlife Conservation Park

- Surveys & Research
- Revegetation
- Outreach and Education
- Stakeholder engagement



Moonlit Sanctuary
the best way to see Aussie animals



Flying the flyways

Migratory shorebird conservation



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Advocacy

- Western Port Strategic Framework
- Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal
- Western Port Woodlands
- Avian influenza



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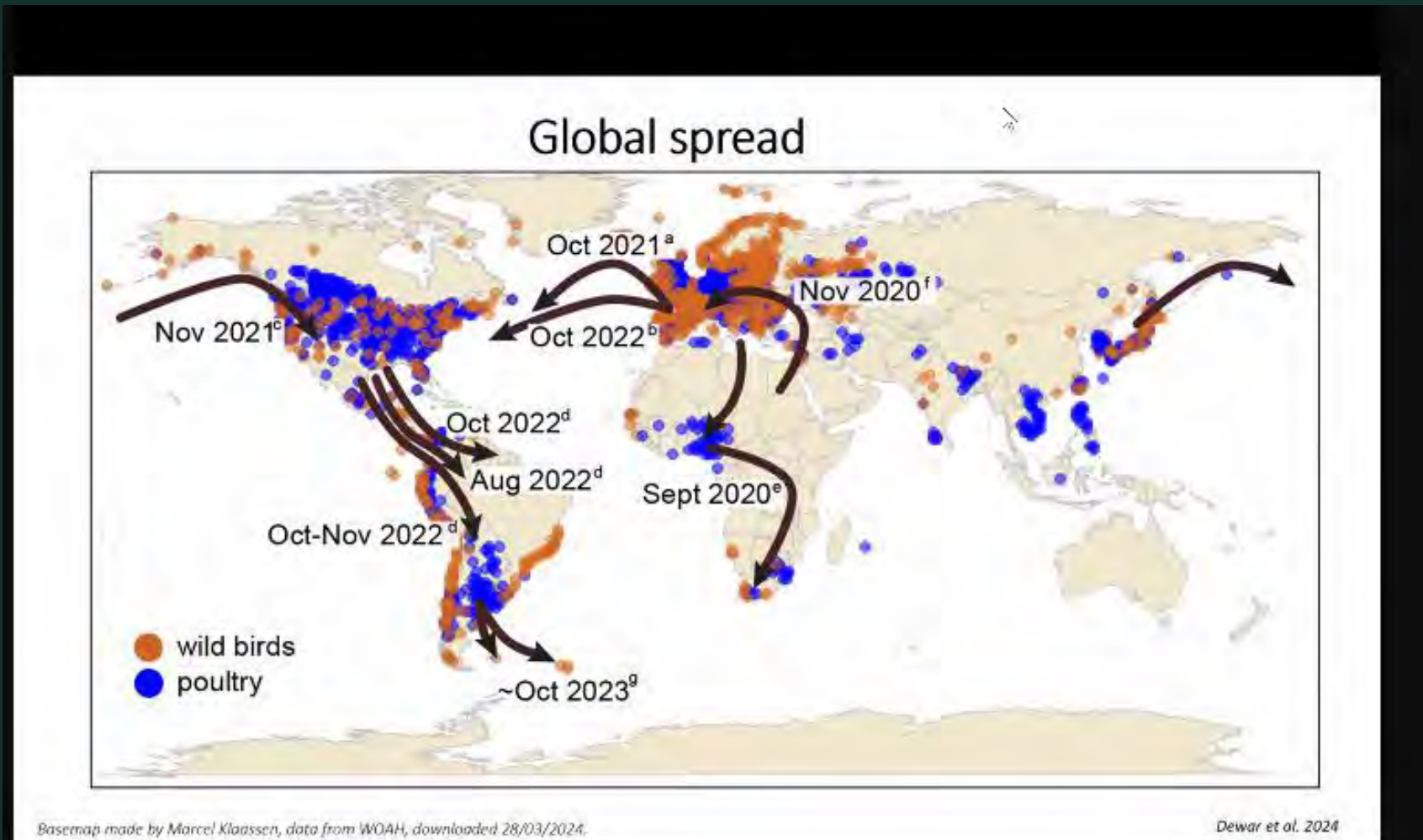
A Strategic Framework

For the future of Western Port Bay



PROTECTING VICTORIA'S
WETLAND BIODIVERSITY AND
SUSTAINABLE MARINE AND
TOURISM INDUSTRIES

Avian influenza



Avian influenza

It's officially labelled HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b.

Media quotes from scientists:

- **Unprecedented** levels of mortality
- An **unprecedented** ecological disaster
- The scale of the mortalities is something we've never seen before and there's no evidence that it's stopping any time soon



Key messages

1. AVOID

2. RECORD

3. REPORT

We are concerned about bird flu arriving in Australia this spring

If you see dead birds in Australia:

- (1) Do not touch dead birds
- (2) Report all instances of dead birds via the Emergency animal disease watch hotline **1800 675 888**
- (3) Follow guidelines provided by state and national response teams
- (4) If feasible, collect information pertaining to the number of dead wild birds, species compositions, location, date and time. Do this from a distance using binoculars and/or cameras.



Who we partner and work with



Examples

- Bass Coast, Casey, Cardinia and Mornington Peninsula local governments
- Landcare Networks – Western Port Catchment, Bass Coast and Mornington Peninsula
- Bunurong Land Council and Willum Warrain in Hastings
- Victorian Government – DEECA
- Melbourne Water
- Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park
- Ozfish
- Phillip Island Nature Parks
- Victoria National Parks Association (VNPA)
- Save Western Port
- Save Western Port Woodlands

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