



Australian Government
Department of the Environment

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

FACT SHEET

History of the IPCC

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for assessing the most recent scientific research on climate change. The IPCC is acknowledged by governments around the world as the most reliable source of advice on climate change.

The IPCC was established in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge on climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. As an intergovernmental body, the IPCC is open to all member countries of the United Nations (UN) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO); currently the IPCC has 195 member countries.

The role of the IPCC

The IPCC reviews the most recent scientific, technical and socio-economic research produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change. The IPCC does not undertake new research, but examines published and peer-reviewed literature to develop a comprehensive assessment of scientific understanding which is published in IPCC Assessment Reports. The scientific and consensus nature of IPCC assessments mean they provide a vital reference and evidence base which underpins government policy decisions .

Structure of the IPCC

The IPCC is organised in three Working Groups and a Task Force that focus on specific aspects of climate change:

Working Group I – *The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change*,

Working Group II – *Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*,

Working Group III – *Mitigation of Climate Change*, and

The Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories.

The main role of each of the Working Groups is to summarise the state of knowledge on climate change in the IPCC Assessment Reports. The Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories helps participating countries calculate and report their emission of greenhouse gases. Each of these Working Groups and the Task Force is led by Co-Chairs and supported by a Technical Support Unit (TSU).

The IPCC Plenary is the main body of IPCC members. Plenary Sessions are held approximately once a year, and bring together hundreds of officials and experts from relevant government departments, agencies and research institutions from member countries and from observer organisations such as multilateral and non-government organisations. At these sessions, the Plenary accept, adopt and approve the IPCC reports and make major decisions on governance, procedural and financial issues.

Review of IPCC Assessment Reports

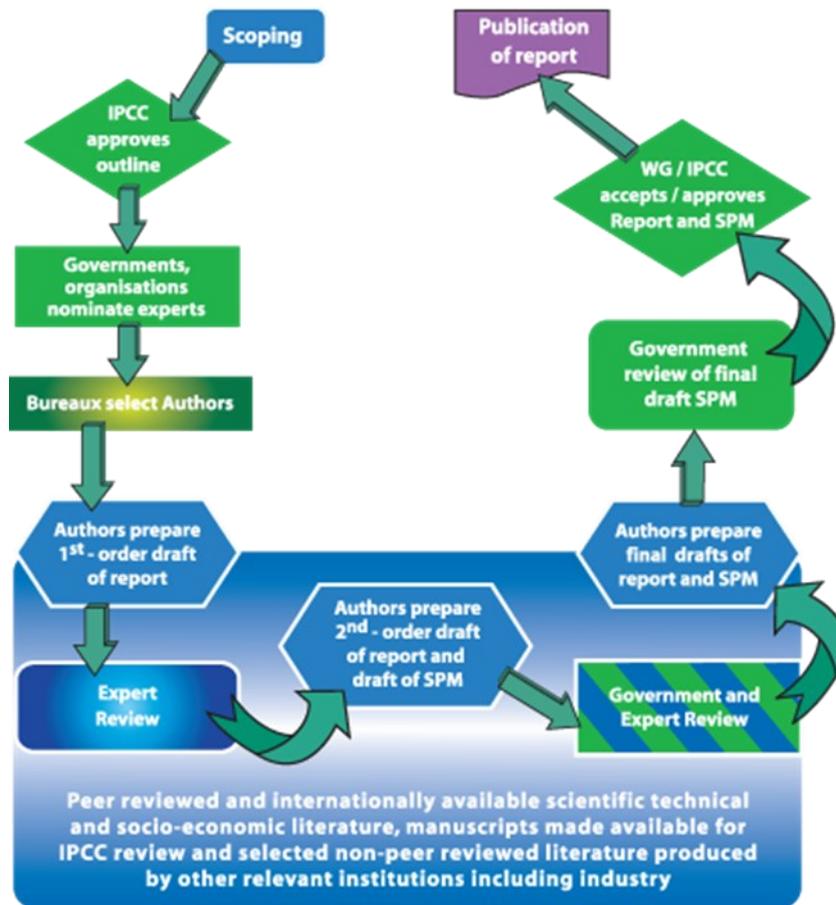
To ensure that they are credible, transparent and objective, the IPCC reports must pass through a rigorous two-stage scientific and technical review process. The IPCC review processes involve broad expert participation, rigorous oversight, and high levels of transparency.

The main stages of the IPCC review process are the review of the ‘first-order draft’ (FOD) by scientific experts, the review of the ‘second-order draft’ (SOD) by experts and governments and the government review of the final draft of the summary for policymakers.

Comment can be submitted to the IPCC during each review and chapter authors are required to consider each comment and explain how comments are incorporated in the reports to independent review editors.

After taking into account the expert and government comments, the final drafts are presented to plenary for acceptance of their content.

Review Process of the IPCC Assessment Reports



IPCC Assessment Reports

The IPCC publishes Assessment Reports every six to seven years, with the IPCC First Assessment report published in 1990.

The Assessment Reports are written by the three Working Groups, and each chapter is produced by a Lead Author team, under which content is coordinated by a Coordinating Lead Author. Contributing Authors are also used to provide more technical information on specific subjects covered by the chapter. Many more scientists and experts from all over the world contribute to the preparation of the Assessment Reports as Review Editors and expert reviewers; none of them are paid by the IPCC.

Authors for each IPCC Assessment Report are selected from nominations received from governments and participating organisations or identified because of their special expertise reflected in their publications and work. Teams of authors reflect a range of views, expertise and geographical representation.

The IPCC Assessment Reports have become standard climate change reference works that are used widely by policymakers, scientists, experts, and the public. The reports are intensely scrutinised and reflect the views of the majority of the international climate science community.

The Fifth Assessment Report

The IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) will be released during 2013-14. Currently the drafts of the AR5 are undergoing a period of Government and Expert review.

Australian authors have featured prominently in all the AR5 Assessment Reports with 39 Australian authors currently engaged in the AR5.

The Working Group I (*The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change*) report will be released following the 36th Session of the IPCC and the 12th Session of the Working Group I in Stockholm Sweden 23-26 September 2013. This session will approve the Summary for Policymakers following finalisation of a review by governments.

Over 250 scientists have been involved as authors and review editors in writing the Working Group I report, and more than 600 additional experts contributed by providing additional specific knowledge or expertise in a given area. The report has also been reviewed by 1089 experts and 38 governments. Over 9200 scientific publications, a large suite of observational datasets from all regions of the world and over 2 million gigabytes of numerical data from climate model simulations formed the basis of the assessment.

Publication of the Fifth Assessment Report

Working Group I – The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change	September 2013
Working Group II – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability	March 2014
Working Group III—Mitigation of Climate Change	April 2014
Synthesis Report	October 2014

InterAcademy Council (IAC) Review

After the release of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon and the IPCC Chairman Mr Rajendra Pachauri requested that the InterAcademy Council (IAC), a multi-national organisation of science academies, review the processes and procedures of the IPCC.

The IAC Review of the Processes and Procedures (IAC Review) made a number of recommendations to strengthen the IPCC management structure and to improve the transparency, consistency and review of IPCC reports and processes. Specifically, the IAC Review has sought to:

- ensure that the IPCC reports continue to be of the highest scientific quality;
- improve transparency in processes to build public confidence in IPCC products; and
- enhance the robustness of IPCC governance.

IPCC members, including Australia, actively participated in implementing the IAC recommendations, all of which have now been completed. The IPCC remains the most authoritative source of information on climate change.