

As Sydney Chokes, A Pollution Expert Calls For “Essential” Air Quality Shelters



By David Adams
10/12/2019

A renowned Australian researcher has called for the establishment of air quality shelters across Australia, saying major cities should brace for the kind of bushfire smoke currently suffocating Sydney.

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In a grim warning, Professor **Lidia Morawska**, director of Queensland University of Technology's International Laboratory for Air Quality and Health, said such shelters will soon become necessary to avoid harmful airborne pollutants.

The kind of bushfire smoke lingering over Sydney “basically impacts on all or most of the organs in the body,” Professor Morawska said, adding that health impacts could become apparent “years after the exposure has occurred.”

To combat the alarming severity of bushfires and air pollution nationwide, Professor Morawska proposed the availability of “shelters for people to spend time where air quality would be sufficiently good.”

Such shelters or any other mitigation measure to prevent exposure don't exist. This is quite essential because we are going to face more events like this, and the impact on health will be significant. To prevent exposure, to prevent health effects, to prevent costs related to these effects, will be not only humanely but economically very important to Australia.

That urgent call came just hours after Sydney's air quality plunged to such hazardous levels that indoor smoke alarms rang throughout the city.

While Professor Morawska said it was difficult to pinpoint the cause of any individual fire, she pointed to climate change as a driving factor in Australia's horrific bushfire season.

“Looking at the overall picture, globally what is happening, it is a pointer to the impact of global climate change,” Professor Morawska said.

“This is my main concern about what is happening, and the fact that we will be facing more of this kind of event.”

Earlier today in Sydney, Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** again defended the Federal Government's commitment to its emission reduction targets, telling reporters “our actions on climate change are getting the results they're intended to get”.

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Professor Morawska said that to avoid those “results”, and a future where air quality shelters are a necessity, young Australians better take notice of what’s going on.

“A day or so ago, there was [a climate change conference which finished in Madrid](#),” she said.

“There were lots of young people involved in this, and the message from the younger generation is very strong and perhaps the type of message which will be driving future directions.

“So this is something for young Australians to take note of on a broader scale.”

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