



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

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Avoiding further global warming can be done cheaply and will improve health

The Climate and Health Alliance, a group of health organisations in Australia, has responded to the recent release of the synthesis report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment by calling for the Australia government to “get its head out of the sand” and start acting responsibly by developing ambitious, effective emissions reductions policies.

“The actions of the Abbott government to abolish the carbon price legislation and the Climate Commission and threaten the renewable energy target – Australia’s only remaining policy helping the nation to cut its emissions – are completely at odds with the science and the actions of other nations, like [China](#), [Brazil](#) and [in Europe](#),” CAHA President and climate and health researcher Dr Liz Hanna said.

With five separate studies showing Australia’s [hottest ever heatwave in the summer of 2014 was entirely attributable to human caused emissions](#), failure to reduce emissions in this most vulnerable of countries was effectively ensuring more deaths and illnesses, Dr Hanna said.

“Climate change is an overwhelmingly negative impact on health globally,” Dr Hanna, “and Australians are also vulnerable, particularly to heat exposure, as we can see from the 167 deaths that occurred during last summer’s heatwave in Victoria.”

The IPCC reveals that children are most critically affected, with a substantial negative impact on child development and stunting from under nutrition among children in developing countries associated with crop failures and weather related disasters.

It also emphasises today’s costs of emission reductions to avoid further dangerous climate change are not only inexpensive, but they are much less than the costs associated with unmitigated climate change.

“Just as prevention is better - and cheaper - than curing illnesses, cutting emissions to avoid further climate change will be much much cheaper than the costs we will incur from further warming,” Dr Hanna said.

Emissions reductions will lead to significant benefits to public health, with the savings from avoided ill health for national budgets [likely to offset, possibly completely in some countries, the costs of emissions reductions](#).

The IPCC report makes clear limiting further global warming is possible, but will require rapid and far reaching transformation and will only be accomplished if governments introduce ambitious policies, backed by strong investments, and there is a complete phase out of fossil fuels.

“Voluntary actions by individuals, communities and businesses to reduce emissions are vital,” Dr Hanna said, “but this report makes clear, safeguarding global and national health requires climate and energy policies that will drive change across all sectors, all industries, and most of all, drive a shift away from fossil fuels. Like all countries, Australia must act now.”

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