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Abbott refusal to attend UN Climate Summit a risk to national interest: health and medical leaders

Australian health and medical leaders attending the UN Climate Summit in New York have criticised the Prime Minister Tony Abbott for refusing to attend the meeting, at which UN Secretary General is calling on political leaders of the world to “prioritise their resources and their political energy” on climate.

Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) President Dr Liz Hanna, who is attending the invitation-only meeting in New York with colleagues Dr Peter Sainsbury and Dr Lynne Madden to represent CAHA’s 27 member groups, said Tony Abbott’s refusal to attend the Summit was “inexcusable”.

“The decision by our Prime Minister not to attend this extremely significant meeting in New York is a slap in the face for the millions of Australians who want effective action on climate change,” Dr Hanna said.

“The refusal by the Australian government to engage in developing an effective global response to the world’s most significant risk to health by ruling out stronger emissions cuts is effectively saying to children and young people: *“We don’t care about your future”.*”

The move was a further blow to Australia’s international reputation as a good global citizen, Dr Hanna said, with 125 other world leaders attending and increasing commitments from other nations to decarbonise.

“The recent Peoples Climate Marches across Australia show people are very concerned about the nation’s growing reputation as a ‘laggard’ on climate change,” Dr Hanna said.

Maintaining peace in the world required more than sending troops to trouble spots, Dr Hanna said.

“Global security and health and wellbeing depends on high emitting nations such as Australia accepting a fair share of the global burden to cut emissions – that means committing to much higher emissions targets, and delivering them,” Dr Hanna said.

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