Restoring a healthy climate: the role of nurses and midwives

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Members

Public Health Association of Australia, the Australian Psychological Society, Doctors for the Environment, Australia, the Australian Women’s Health Network, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, the Australian Nursing Federation, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Australian Association of Social Workers, the Australian Hospitals and Healthcare Association, the Australian Rural Health Education Network, the Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Health Promotion Association, Australian Institute of Health Innovation, CRANAplus, Doctors Reform Society, the Health Issues Centre, Royal College of Nursing, Australia, Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health, North Yarra Community Health, Women’s Health East, Women’s Health in the North, and World Vision
The Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commissions:

- Climate change “biggest global health threat of the 21st century”
- Called for a public health movement that “frames the threat of climate change for humankind as a health issue”
Planetary Boundaries:
Exploring the safe operating space for humanity
Tipping points

The Critical Decade: postponing action is not an option.

Climate “tipping points” refer to abrupt non-linear changes in climate system when an apparently small change triggers an unexpected large complex response - due to positive feedback.

“If we plan to write a prescription in eight years time, we might instead find ourselves writing a death sentence.”

Professor Hugh Montgomery, Global Climate and Health Summit, Durban, December 2011
Climate advocacy is an issue for all health professionals

“Health professionals everywhere have a responsibility to put health at the heart of climate change negotiations. Firstly, because climate change already has, and will continue to have, a major adverse impact on the health of human populations. Secondly, because reducing greenhouse-gas emissions has unrivalled opportunities for improving public health. Indeed, moving to a low carbon economy could be the next great public health advance.”

• Unique voice in the debate as a coalition of health groups
• Can speak with credibility and authority
• Highlighting the broader determinants of health
• Calling for integrated policy solutions
• Repositioning climate change as a health issue
CAHA Committee of Management

- Michael Moore (Public Health Association of Australia)
- Erica Bell (Australian Rural Health Education Network)
- Lance Emerson (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth)
- Bret Hart (Alliance for Future Health)
- Liz Hanna (Royal College of Nursing Australia)
- Julia Stewart (CRANApplus)
- Kristine Olaris (North Yarra Community Health)
- Elizabeth Reale (Australian Nursing Federation)
- Ursula King (Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine)

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Expert advisory committee

- Associate Professor Erica Bell, University Department of Rural Health, University of Tasmania
- Professor David Karoly, Federation Fellow in the School of Earth Sciences, University of Melbourne
- Professor Stephan Lewandowsky, School of Psychology, University of Western Australia
- Dr Peter Tait, RACGP General Practitioner of the Year 2007, Alice Springs
- Associate Professor Grant Blashki, Nossal Institute for Global Health
- Professor Anthony Capon, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University
- Professor Simon Chapman, Professor of Public Health, University of Sydney
- Dr Susie Burke, Senior Psychologist, Public Interest, Environment & Disaster Response, Australian Psychological Society
- Dr Marion Carey, Public Health Research Fellow, Monash Sustainability Institute
What are the human health impacts from climate change?

- Illnesses and deaths associated with heatwaves
- Injuries and deaths from severe flooding and storms
- Increased incidence of food or water borne infectious diseases
- Dengue and Ross River fever
- Worsening respiratory disease – ground level ozone
- Infants and children, the elderly, Indigenous Australians, people with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities, and those in coastal as well as rural, remote and regional communities are being disproportionately affected
- Psychological impacts – solastalgia, “loss of the future”, fear and anxiety

Deakin University May 2012
Health impacts are now

Victoria in January 2009 in one five day period:

- 62% increase in mortality, from direct heat related illnesses and exacerbations of chronic medical conditions.
- Ambulances had a 46% increase in demand
- Eight-fold increase in heat related presentations to EDs
- 2.8 fold increase in cardiac arrests
- Threefold increase in patients dead on arrival

NSWNA 15 May 2012
The role of coal
“Doubt is our product”
- Tobacco executive

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97 out of 100 climate experts think humans are causing global warming
Exposing funders of denialist organisations
The real story

100% renewable energy for Australia in just ten years
Action on climate = better health + $
CLIMATE SUMMIT

WHAT IF IT'S A BIG HOAX AND WE CREATE A BETTER WORLD FOR NOTHING?

- ENERGY INDEPENDENCE
- PRESERVE RAINFORESTS
- SUSTAINABILITY
- GREEN JOBS
- LIVABLE CITIES
- RENEWABLES
- CLEAN WATER, AIR
- HEALTHY CHILDREN
- ETC. ETC.

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Health Care Without Harm is an international coalition of 473 organizations in more than 50 countries working to transform the health care sector without compromising patient care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and not a source of harm to public health and the environment.
Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Agenda

The Agenda sets out to support existing efforts around the world to promote greater sustainability and environmental health in the health sector.

The Agenda provides a comprehensive framework for hospitals and health systems everywhere in the world.
Protecting Public Health From Climate Change – A Global Call to Action

*Launched in Durban, South Africa*
*December 4, 2011*

“We are profoundly concerned that as greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise unabated, dangerous climate change will magnify existing health crises, deepening and broadening the global burden of disease. This will in turn raise health care costs worldwide, while undermining and overwhelming public health infrastructure everywhere. We call on our colleagues around the world to endorse this Call to Action and take concerted action.”

NSWNA 15 May 2012
THE CURE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IS EMPATHY
It’s more than just cutting emissions...

“…simply tinkering around the edges of “business as usual” is a formula for national catastrophe. We must urgently transform our governance, our economy and our culture in ways that will permit our descendants to live within the limits of nature’s economy.

“Australia’s political system is largely ignoring the seriousness of the gathering storm that includes climate change, peak oil, disastrous loss of ecosystems, increasing world hunger and inequity and continuing growth in the human population.”

Emeritus Professor Bob Douglas, former Director of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at ANU, November 2011
What else can nurses and midwives do?

• Advocate for climate action on the basis of health protection
• Improve climate ‘literacy’ among health professionals
• Campaign for a shift away from fossil fuels
• Work with organisations like CAHA to raise awareness
• Endorse the GGHHA and help ‘green the sector’
Civil society leadership

*New Scientist*, 10 February 2012
by Fred Pearce, London

“We can forget about fixing the planet's ecosystems and climate until we have fixed government systems,” a panel of leading international environmental scientists declared in London on Friday.

The solution, they said, may not lie with governments at all. They believe leadership must come from civil society, from NGOs, local government and corporations, rather than national leaders or the UN.
Resources

- *Climate Code Red*, Spratt and Sutton  
  www.climatecodered.org.au
- Skeptical Science  www.skepticalscience.com
- Australian Academy of Sciences
- The Climate Commission
- Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCCEE)
- Potsdam Institute in Germany
- Tyndall Centre in UK
- *Nature Climate Change*
- Reframing climate change as a public health issue: Maibach *et al.* BMC Public Health 2010, 10:299.