The role of health professionals as policy advocates

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Background

Health policy advocacy – Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA)
www.healthreform.org.au
Health: A blueprint for change
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”
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, CRANApus, Doctors Reform Society, the Health Issues Centre, Royal College of Nursing, Australia, Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health, North Yarra Community Health, Health East, Women’s Health in the North, and World Vision
Why advocate?

• United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1994

• Currently, there are 195 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and 193 Parties to its Kyoto Protocol.
The Last 10,000 Years seems to have been ideal for the development of human societies. Is this a historic “sweet spot” that enabled humans and other species to flourish?
Fossil CO₂ Emissions

Possible Future without Climate Policy

1000 GtCO₂ until 2050

Global Warming

Probability of exceeding 2°C
No climate policy: 100%
Emission budget of 1000 GtCO₂ until 2050: 25%

Possible Future without Climate Policy

max +2°C

1000 GtCO₂ until 2050

Past observed Temperatures
What's happened?
“Doubt is our product”
- Tobacco executive

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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
What’s possible?

It is possible to transition to 100% renewable energy for Australia in just ten years using off the shelf technology – combination of wind and solar.
Action on climate = better health + $
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.”
Policy cycle

The Australian policy cycle

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Policy tools

- Financial incentives and disincentives
- Subsidies
- Regulation
- Taxation
- Education
- Public funding
- Research
- Targets
- Legislation
What is the Australian government response to the biggest threat to global public health?
Influencing the policy process
Submission to McKeon Review – national review of health and medical research – March 2012
Submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms - 10 February 2011.
CAHA produces Briefing Papers to provide an overview of the Alliance’s views on particular topics. These are produced to share with parliamentarians, policymakers, the media, health care stakeholders and the community.

Briefing Paper No 1: Climate change is a health issue
Briefing Paper No 2: A price on carbon is good for health
Briefing Paper No. 3: The carbon price framework
Briefing Paper No. 4: Water for the Murray Darling: Healthy rivers – Healthy People
Health and wind turbines
This position statement has been developed in response to claims that there are adverse health effects associated with human exposure to wind turbines. An expert review reveals there is no credible scientific evidence that demonstrates a direct causal link between wind turbines and adverse health impacts in people living in proximity to them.
Engaging with the community

Climate and Health Clinic

Review of a novel health promotion initiative

April 2012

Your Prescription for a Healthy Life and a Healthy Planet

A healthy environment is essential for good health. There are many ways to reduce your environmental footprint and improve your health at the same time. The "Prescription" will help you identify opportunities to improve your health and the climate. Which of the categories Getting Around, Home, Food for Thought and Nature do you rate as a priority need to be addressed?

Notes:

1. How often do you notice your neighbours' health?
2. Could your movement be hindered by unhealthy living in your public transport?
3. Are you aware of the impact of climate change on your health?
4. Are there other aspects of your community that need to be addressed for the health and well-being of the community?

Eco-friendly ways to cut the carbon footprint include:

1. Reduce your carbon footprint by recycling and composting.
2. Consume less energy by choosing energy-efficient appliances.
3. Save water by using low-flow toilets and faucets.
4. Use energy-efficient light bulbs.
5. Carpool to work or use public transportation.
7. Plant native plants and trees to help improve air quality.
8. Reduce waste by using reusable bags and containers.
9. Use public transportation or bike to work.
10. Support clean energy initiatives and advocate for renewable energy sources.
CLIMATE AND HEALTH ALLIANCE PRESENTS

WHY A HEALTHY PLANET MEANS A HEALTHY YOU

LOWER EMISSIONS & LENGTHEN YOUR LIFE

What do sick cities, mental health, urban transport and green lungs have in common? Join this groundbreaking forum to find out why a safe climate means a healthy human being.
The First Global Climate and Health Summit, takes place parallel to the COP 17 climate negotiations. It aims to bring together key health sector actors to discuss the impacts of climate change on public health and solutions that promote greater health, as well as economic equity between and within nations.

PARTNERS:
- World Health Organization
- World Medical Association
- Public Health Association of South Africa
- International Council of Nurses
- International Federation of Medical Students Associations
- groundWork, South Africa
- Health and Environment Alliance, Europe
- Climate and Health Alliance, Australia

CO-ORGANIZERS:
- Health Care Without Harm
- Climate and Health Council
- World Federation of Public Health Associations
- Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine
- University of KwaZulu-Natal

For more information, and to register contact: globalclimate@hcwh.org
Global Call to Action

The Climate and Health Alliance has endorsed the Global Call to Action issued at the Global Climate and Health Summit in December 2011.

This Call to Action is issued to all our health care colleagues around the world – in public health organizations, health professional associations, hospitals, health systems and ministries of health – to join us in taking concerted action on climate change to protect health.
THE CURE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IS EMPATHY
Exposing funders of denialist organisations

Call to reveal ALL funding behind climate sceptics
Published by: Nell Crowden on 18th Feb 2012 | View all blogs by Nell Crowden

Statement from climate scientists and health professionals:

Call to reveal ALL funding behind climate sceptics

What motivates the Heartland Institute? As climate and other scientists and health professionals, we view the systematic sowing of unjustified doubt about mainstream international climate science as confusing at best, and inhumane at worst. The Hippocratic Oath, the values of which generations of health professionals have adhered to, declares 'first, do no harm'. In 2009, The Lancet declared, 'climate change is the biggest global health threat of the twenty-first century'. Healthcare professionals have a duty to protect patients from disease and environmental harm. Biomedical treatment is just one form of healthcare. Public health professionals study relationships between climate change, sustainability, human health, carbon, physiology, and weather events. Scientific evidence demonstrates that sustainable development can bring with it health benefits, making it a win-win scenario (Lancet, November 2009). We only have a few years to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to avert dangerous climate change. Given the
The health “frame”
Conveying the Human Implications of Climate Change

A Climate Change Communication Primer for Public Health Professionals

Edward Mbiatia, MPH, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
George Mason University

Matthew Hober, PhD
School of Communication
American University

Melba Woodruff, MA
Center for Climate Change Communication
George Mason University
Resources

• *Climate Code Red*, Spratt and Sutton
• 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.