Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to the health of people in Australia and across the world.

We, the undersigned, call on all political parties and candidates in the upcoming federal election to:

1. Acknowledge the significant and profound impacts climate change has on the health of people and our health system.

2. Support the implementation of a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being, based on the Framework developed by health stakeholders.¹

3. Ensure the Strategy includes a credible, equitable and stable plan to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with emphasis on a rapid transition to renewable energy in the electricity and transport sectors.

4. Support rapid phase out of fossil fuel subsidies which contribute to climate change and health impacts.

5. Support the implementation of a plan to assist the health sector and the community, particularly people at risk, to adapt and build resilience to unavoidable climate change impacts already locked in.

6. Support a climate and health research program to evaluate specific threats to health in Australia from climate change and the burning of fossil fuels.

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

¹ Including but not limited to:
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Greenpeace
- Friends of the Earth Australia
- Nature Conservation Council
- CAPHIA
- Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australia
- Australian Medical Students' Association
- RACP Specialists. Together
- Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- National Mental Health Alliance
- Mental Health Australia
- Public Health Association of Australia
- National Union of Teachers
- Australian College of Nursing
- Right to Food Coalition
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- Australian Health Promotion Association
- Australian College of Health Service Management
- Medical Scientist Association of Victoria
- L.I.V.E.
- Women's Health in the North
- Gender & Diversity
- Australian Women's Health Network
- Australian College of Social Workers
- Australian Institute of Health Innovation
- Climate Action Hobart
- Climate Action Monaro
- Climate Action Moreland
- Climate Change
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- Climate Action
Australia has committed to the Paris Agreement and the goals of reducing global warming to well below 2 degrees, and pursuing 1.5 degrees. This commitment also includes an obligation for Australia to consider its citizens ‘right to health’ in the context of its national climate change response. But the response from successive governments to date has been woefully inadequate, and Australian peoples’ health and lives are at risk.

Climate change has been described by the World Health Organization as a health emergency, and by The Lancet medical journal as the greatest threat to health of the 21st century. These statements on the real health risks of climate change are backed by several decades of national and global scientific evidence, and the direct experience of hundreds of thousands of people experiencing the health impacts of climate change every day, and hundreds of thousands of deaths that have already occurred.

People experiencing poverty or disadvantage are most vulnerable to health impacts from climate change. There are more than 3 million people, including 739,000 children, living in poverty in Australia who struggle to afford the basics including adequate health care.

The World Health Organization estimates by 2030 there will be 250,000 additional deaths each year attributable to climate change. The 2012 DARA report on climate vulnerability estimated deaths associated with climate change and the carbon economy (due to the pollution it produces) will rise to six million deaths per year by 2030.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees report provides incontrovertible evidence that the “climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C.”
Health services in Australia are already experiencing the destructive effects of climate change, which is damaging vital health infrastructure, impacting the health workforce, and putting at risk the ability of some services to continue to provide care for the community. These threats will only amplify in the future, putting more lives at risk.

These risks and consequences cannot be managed through the existing health system. Reports from the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) national consultation with Australian health professionals confirm the Australian health sector is ill-prepared to manage the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and the healthcare system.

Well-designed climate policies however offer an unprecedented opportunity to improve health and well-being. Investing in climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable healthcare is vital to reduce emissions in the sector and ensure the delivery of safe, quality care into the future.

The organisations listed here support a Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being to guide this work. We acknowledge the Australian Labor Party’s commitment to implement a National Climate, Health and Well-being Plan based on this Framework if elected to govern, and the support of The Greens. We call upon the Coalition to make a similar commitment.

We stand ready to assist the next Australian Government to further develop and implement comprehensive policy to avoid further loss of life, injury and illness that will inevitably result if there is any further delay. Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to the health of people in Australia and across the world.

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

- Dr Ann Borda, PhD, CHA, Associate Professor.
- Dr Peter Sainsbury, Adjunct Associate Professor, Public Health, School of Public Health.
- Professor Gerry FitzGerald MD, FACEM, FRACMA, FCHSM.
- Dr Liz Hanna PhD, MPH, BA, RCCN, RN FPAA, FACN.
- Harriet Barker, MESSS, RN, Grad Dip Midwifery.
- Sarah Stewart, Chief Operations Officer, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.
- Dr Tim Woodruff, President, Doctors Reform Society.
- Professor Lucie Rychetnik (MPhil, PhD), School of Medicine Sydney, University of Notre Dame Australia.
- Ms Danielle Schutte, BA.
- Frank Megens, RN, RM, M Health Administration.
- S.M. Cooke, MPH, Sessional Lecturer, Climate Change and Health.
- Dr Sinead Boylan (PhD), Executive Officer, Climate Change, Human Health and Social Impacts Node, The University of Sydney.
- Peter Brooks AM MD FRACP FAFPHM, Hon Professor Centre for Health Policy, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.
- Dr Elizabeth Haworth, Senior Research Fellow, University of Tasmania.
- Professor Jennifer Martin, School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Newcastle.
- Distinguished Professor Stewart Lockie (PhD, FASSA) Director, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University.
- Dr Tammyra Warby BSc, MBBS, PhD, FRACGP Co-Lead Global Planetary Health Declaration Project.
- Prof John Wiseman, Adjunct Professor, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne.
- Dr David Harley, Visiting Fellow, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.
- Dr Celia McMichael, School of Geography, The University of Melbourne.
- Associate Professor Grant Blashki, MD MBBS FRACGP GAICD University of Melbourne.
- Hilary Bambrick, Professor and Head of School, School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology.
- Dr Kathryn Bowen, Hon. Senior Research Fellow, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University, Consultant, World Health Organization (Climate Change and Human Health).
- Professor Melissa Hassell, MSc, PhD, School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology.
- Rob Moodie, AM MBBS MPH FAFPHM FRACGP Professor of Public Health, Deputy Head, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.
- Maxine Whittaker MBBS MPH PhD FAFPHM GAICD, Dean, College of Public Health, Co-Director WHO Collaborating Centre for Vector Borne and Neglected Tropical Diseases.
REFERENCES

7. Watts, N. et al, ibid
8. Loosemore, M, and Chand, A. (2016) Barriers to Building Resilience to Extreme Weather Events in Australian Hospitals, Available at: http://www.acoom.ac.uk/docs/proceedings/643685eb7e4398cc4856a998e57e2788e.pdf
   Also see: https://theconversation.com/hospitals-feel-the-heat-too-from-extreme-weather-and-its-health-impacts-7097