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# Open letter to the Prime Minister, The Hon. Scott Morrison MP

On behalf of the millions of  
Australians represented by our  
members, **we, the undersigned,**  
**call for urgent climate action**  
**to protect health** and present  
our plan for a *Healthy,*  
*Regenerative and Just* future.

**Dear Prime Minister,**

2020 has shifted the foundations of life for people across the world, with the COVID-19 pandemic taking more than one million lives globally.

In Australia, we have lost more than 900 lives, the entire population has been affected by necessary public health measures, and the pandemic's impact will be felt for years to come.

**However, when we look around the world, it's clear that it could have been much worse.**

We are grateful for the leadership that you, and other elected leaders, have displayed throughout the pandemic, in turning to health experts, trusting science and bringing the country together around a common aim: protecting lives and securing public health.

Yet another threat to our health continues without similar intervention: climate change.

**We, leading Australian health and social welfare groups, write to ask that you apply the same level of urgency in tackling climate change as you have to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Climate change is a health emergency.**

The World Health Organization has declared that climate change is the greatest threat to human health this century.

**Climate change is accelerating, and if our current trajectory continues unchecked, we face existential threats to humanity.**

As global temperatures rise, extreme weather events, like bushfires, droughts, cyclones and floods, will become more frequent and more severe, putting the lives, health and well-being of the entire population at risk. We will see increasing levels of air pollution, threats to food and water security and further risks from infectious disease.

**Climate change risks disrupting the healthcare supply chain, damaging our health infrastructure and threatening the safety and quality of health care provided.**

Climate change is also worsening the conditions that led to the COVID-19 pandemic, with environmental degradation and habitat loss responsible for the increased risks of zoonotic diseases, like the coronavirus.

**To avoid further health and environmental disasters, governments must take heed of the science, listen to health experts and act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the natural environment.**

Decisions made now will set us up for decades to come. With the momentum required to stimulate the economy, create jobs and recover post-COVID, this is our moment to move towards a healthier, regenerative and just future.

**The Federal Budget did not meet this moment.**

While the latest budget spends big, it prioritises private investment and, in particular, provides millions of dollars in support for fossil fuel expansion, particularly gas.

**This is completely at odds with the objective of the Paris Agreement and the scientific evidence that we must stop using fossil fuels.**

Investing in gas will only hasten the accelerating climate crisis. The latest evidence suggests gas is just as emissions intensive as coal. A recent report from the *United Nations Environment Program* has highlighted that investing in gas or any fossil fuels is inconsistent with trying to reduce emissions, and will put at risk the world's ability to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees or 2 degrees Celsius.<sup>1</sup>

**Right now we have the opportunity to re-shape our society for a healthy, regenerative and just future for all that makes the most of our abundant, renewable natural resources.**

This requires a comprehensive nationally coordinated response to climate change, which puts health and well-being at its core. This must include:

1. Committing to our fair share in limiting global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius, in line with the Paris Agreement
2. Dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting jobs in clean and low carbon industries, and securing clean air, clean water and healthy food as basic human rights
3. Integrating climate and health disaster and emergency planning to effectively manage threats from concurrent climate and health emergencies

1. <http://productiongap.org>

4. Enhancing community resilience, including supporting those facing the immediate, ongoing impacts of climate change and the transition to renewable energy
5. Training the workforce required for the low carbon transition, and ensuring health professionals and the community better understand the links between climate change and health
6. Investing in climate resilience and low carbon healthcare to ensure the health system and workforce can cope with climate impacts and continue to provide safe, quality care
7. Establishing clear responsibilities across multiple government portfolios to deliver on climate and health strategies
8. Investing in research and knowledge sharing to guide understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities and effective solutions
9. Recognising that human health and the health of our planet are inextricably linked, and that our civilisation depends on human health, flourishing natural systems, and the wise stewardship of natural resources
10. Recognising the value of, and benefits from, being guided by the unique insights and wisdom available from First Australians' traditional cultural knowledge and practice

**This is the future we choose. We urge you to join us.**



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