

Climate Change and Health

Key Messages

Climate change poses serious, increasing threats to human health, and the environmental and planetary systems on which our health depends.

The health of people in Australia is being severely and negatively impacted by climate change - bushfires/smoke, floods, heatwaves, drought, food security.

There are clear pathways to improving health and wellbeing through climate action.

Failing to pursue these pathways is extremely costly, is damaging Australia's standing in the world, and ultimately poses an existential threats.

There is a strong consensus among health stakeholders about the need for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia.

How does climate change affect health?

Climate change has severe impacts on human health. In Australia, some of these impacts are:

- heat-related deaths and illnesses, including heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease;
- respiratory disease from air pollution and bushfires;
- increased vector-borne diseases, such as coronaviruses, Ross River and dengue; and
- worsening mental health associated with environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change.

1. <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2020/09/10/economic-cost-climate-change/>

These impacts are already happening in Australia and are leading to a health crisis far worse than COVID-19

Under current emissions policies, climate change will cost the Australian economy at least \$1.89 trillion over the next 30 years (~4% of GDP each year). By 2038, annual economic damages will be comparable to the estimated annual cost of COVID-19 for Australia.¹

What are we asking for?

A comprehensive National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being, to:

- Enable the Commonwealth to protect the health and wellbeing of Australian communities from climate change; and
- Meet Australia's obligation under the Paris Agreement to include health in its national climate change response.

What can you do?

1. Publicly support the development of National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being, as well as further recommendations from the Healthy, Regenerative and Just policy agenda
2. Advocate for action on climate change and health in Parliament, by:
 - a. Raising the issue in your Party Room
 - b. Making a speech outlining your support
3. Highlight your support for action on climate change to protect health, by:
 - a. Sending out a media statement on the issue
 - b. Posting about this on social media
 - c. Hosting a climate and health meeting or event in your electorate

Key Recommendations

1. Develop short, medium and long term emissions reduction targets consistent with limiting climate change to 1.5°C
2. Reduce air pollution from fossil fuels by phasing out coal, stop future investment in gas, and prioritise renewable energy infrastructure projects
3. Inform climate and health policy decisions with analysis of economic savings from the health benefits of emissions reduction strategies (cleaner air, active transport, healthier diets)
4. Integrate climate and health disaster planning and emergency planning to manage concurrent climate and health emergencies
5. Invest in long term risk management and security of energy, water, and food systems
6. Develop a national education campaign to inform the public about the links between climate change and health
7. Establish national sustainable development unit in Federal Department of Health to provide national leadership on the health sector's climate and environmental footprint



8. Create a National Ministerial Forum on climate change and health to facilitate cooperation and leadership across multiple portfolios on climate and health policy
9. Build Australia's research capacity by funding research on climate and health
10. Expand conservation programs to preserve natural environments (both land and marine) and restore forests, rivers and wetlands

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