



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Media Statement - 15 October 2018

Health groups welcome support for climate and health strategy

Health groups representing hundreds of thousands of health professionals across Australia are calling on all Wentworth by-election candidates to support a national strategy on climate change and health, warning the evidence of health impacts from a changing climate are too severe to ignore.

Independent candidate for Wentworth, Dr Kerryn Phelps, is the latest candidate to back the national strategy based on the framework developed by health stakeholders, following last week's IPCC report that "unprecedented" changes were needed if global warming increases 1.5C beyond the pre-industrial period.

Dr Kerryn Phelps announced her support today for a national strategy on climate, health and well-being based on the framework developed by health stakeholders. The Australian Labor Party has declared a commitment to implement the strategy in government. The Greens have also expressed their support for the strategy.

Public health expert Dr Peter Sainsbury said: "Climate change is already having serious impacts on the health of Australians – just look at the relentless heatwaves we are now experiencing, and the devastating impact of drought on farmers and our food supply.

"The implementation of a national strategy will be an investment in the future health and wellbeing of the Australian community, currently at serious risk from a changing climate.

"Strategies to cut emissions will bring considerable health benefits for Australians now and into the future."

Brett Holmes, Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association said: "Nurses and midwives are increasingly witnessing the effects of climate change on the health of their communities. These include increases in heart attacks during heat waves, and increased admissions related to worsening air pollution and heat stress. Those particularly affected are older people, children, those in aged care, people with chronic illnesses, and those requiring prescription medications.

"Leadership on this issue is long overdue. This must be made a priority by all parliamentarians, and all levels of government. We need action now."

Dr Peter Tait, Public Health Association of Australia, said: "Last week's IPCC report on 1.5 degrees shows health impacts increase inexorably as temperatures rise. With a rise of barely 1 degree, we are already seeing earlier and more extreme fire seasons, worsening drought, more frequent intense storms. Human health and well-being depend on not just a

good hospital system – climate disruption is now a huge factor. We cannot afford to go to 1.5 degrees, let alone 2 degrees.

“The PHAA supports this policy framework for a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being. We call on all parties and independents to support it, and work together to implement it as a national priority.”

Fiona Armstrong, Executive Director of Climate and Health Alliance said: “Given the evidence of health impacts from climate change, it’s no wonder Dr Kerryn Phelps, a former Australian Medical Association President, is in support of a national strategy on climate change and health.

“The health sector is calling out for this coordinated national response. The duty and mission of health professionals is to care for people when they are sick, and to work to prevent illness and disease. They are deeply concerned about the failure of the current federal parliament to show leadership to protect people’s health from climate change. The sector has worked together in an unprecedented way to provide guidance for governments on this issue. It’s time for implementation.”

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About the Framework for National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being

The world-first policy Framework followed extensive consultation with the health sector, and is supported by dozens of groups, including Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian College of Emergency Medicine, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Australian College of Health Service Management, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

For more information, visit: <http://www.caha.org.au/national-strategy-climate-health-wellbeing>