



CLIMATE^{AND}
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

Health professionals weigh in on air pollution impact

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Australia's leading health groups are calling on the government to respond to the increasing threat of air pollution to people's health.

As the World Health Organisation meets for the first ever global conference on air pollution and health in Geneva on Monday, the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) voiced growing concern about the increasing health impacts on the Australian population.

CAHA Executive Director, Fiona Armstrong, said: "Burning fossil fuels for energy and transport causes about 3,000 premature deaths a year in Australia, which equates to eight premature deaths a day, a figure almost three times the national road toll."

CAHA offers its support to the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC) which represents major medical bodies including the Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association which is today demanding the UK parliament introduces new clean air legislation following warnings from World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations and UNICEF about the UK's toxic air.

The Climate and Health Alliance says similar laws are necessary in Australia. "Air pollution in Australia regularly exceeds national air quality standards, which are inadequate to protect human health. With rising temperatures, a rapidly growing population, more people living in cities, and growing demand for energy and transportation, air quality is worsening in our cities and regional areas.

"Even short-term exposure to air pollution can cause health problems. Children, the elderly and people with existing chronic conditions are particularly vulnerable.

"The combustion of petrol and diesel for transport is a major source of air pollution in Australia causes respiratory, cardiovascular disease and cancer, estimated to cost \$3.3 billion per annum." The Climate and Health Alliance has consistently called for stronger air quality standards, along with a national framework for monitoring compliance.

"Air quality standards only protect people if they are enforced," Armstrong said.

"Australians are currently being put at risk because governments are failing to act. We call for the federal, state and territory governments to work together to implement and enforce air pollution laws to protect the Australian community."

Interviews available

Fiona Armstrong, Executive Director, CAHA

