



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

Phase out of coal and a carbon price are key public health measures: research report

Health groups representing around 50% of the national health professional workforce are demanding the implementation of a national climate and health policy following the publication of the latest assessment of Australia's performance in the international medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The Lancet Countdown report, which assesses countries' performance on indicators including vulnerability to climate impacts, adaptation and mitigation plans, shows that Australia continues to lag behind comparable high-income countries in its response to climate change and the impacts on human health.

Climate and Health Alliance Executive Director Fiona Armstrong said: "Australia's dismal rankings shows us we are not doing enough to keep Australians safe. We urgently need a National Climate and Health Strategy to address the health risks arising from climate change.

"Extreme weather events, warmer temperatures, and burning fossil fuels for energy are already exacerbating health problems in Australia such as heart and lung disease, heat stress, and infectious diseases.

"Leaders in Australia's health sector have [already developed a detailed framework](#) to support policymakers' efforts to introduce a climate-health strategy and help Australia track progress against *Lancet Countdown* indicators. All we need now is the political will from our elected leaders."

The Lancet Countdown Australian Policy Brief assessed Australia's performance in relation to four key indicators:

- climate-sensitive infectious diseases
- decarbonisation of Australia's energy system
- sustainable travel infrastructure and uptake
- mental health impacts of climate change

To protect people's health, the Lancet Policy Brief recommends a total phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation by 2030, as well as ambitious emissions reduction targets, carbon pricing, and moratoria on fossil fuel subsidies.

Co-lead of the Health, Nature and Sustainability Research Group at Deakin University, Dr Rebecca Patrick, said: "These results confirm Australia needs a national strategy to tackle what is described as the biggest threat to global public health this century.

“We need a national climate and health strategy to ensure that Australia meets its Paris commitments and maximises the potential health benefits associated with cleaner energy production, and other low carbon initiatives.

“Implementation of the policies outlined in the strategy framework will start a virtuous cycle of co-benefits where actions such as phasing out coal-fired power will not only cut emissions and the risks from global warming, but also reduce air pollution and improve health.

Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association Chief Executive Alison Verhoeven said: “A coordinated national effort is required to ensure that Australia is well prepared to protect the health and well-being of communities from the impacts of climate change.

“Ensuring our hospitals and health infrastructure are resilient in the face of extreme weather events go hand in hand with governments supporting the health sector transition to a lower carbon footprint.

“Actions on this front will be a key factor in shaping the future health and well-being of Australians for generations to come.”

Other climate and health policy measures recommended in the Lancet Countdown Australian Policy Brief include:

- investing in monitoring and early warning systems for climate-sensitive diseases;
- investing in active transport in order to capitalise on the environmental, health, and economic benefits of a more active population and a less polluting transport system;
- identifying populations vulnerable to the mental health impacts of climate change; and
- updating all Australian medical school curricula to include the impacts of climate change on human health.

Background

The Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change is an international research collaboration, dedicated to tracking the world's response to climate change, and the health benefits that emerge from this transition. Reporting annually in The Lancet, it will follow a series of indicators, demonstrating that this transition is possible, that it has already begun, but that more work is needed.

The Lancet Countdown 2018 report is available here: <http://www.lancetcountdown.org>

The Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health, and Well-Being is available [here](#).

Climate and Health Alliance Members include:

