



Stronger air pollution laws essential for Australian's health Media Release 8 August 2019

Australia's air pollution standards are failing to protect the health of the nation's children and costing the nation \$16 billion each year, the national peak body for health groups, the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA), said today.

"Australian children are increasingly suffering from asthma, in rates that are among the highest in the world," CAHA Executive Director Fiona Armstrong said.

"Air pollution is having a negative impact on the health of the Australian community – a situation that is preventable and if rectified, would save thousands of lives each year."

The Climate and Health Alliance has contributed to the current review of Australia's Air Quality Standards being conducted by the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC). The review has attracted over 10,000 submissions, with Australians calling for stronger, health-based air quality standards, to replace those established over 20 years ago. Environment Ministers will meet to decide on new standards later this year.

Australia's minimum standards for many common air pollutants such as sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and ozone (O₃) are well above the levels recommended by the World Health Organization. These pollutants are known to cause harm to health at levels below the current standards.

Ms Armstrong said health and medical experts, and leading professional bodies, including the Australian Medical Association and Royal Australasian College of Physicians, were calling for reform.

"The weight of scientific evidence is behind considerable strengthening of Australia's air pollution standards. People are suffering unnecessarily from strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma, because of our outdated and inadequate regulations.

"This is unacceptable, and easily solved. The evidence shows cleaner air will reap health, climate and economic benefits that vastly outstrip the costs of taking action."

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Expert Statement available [here](#).

Climate and Health Alliance Members include: [Abilita](#), [Australian Association of Social Workers \(AASW\)](#), [Australian College of Nursing \(ACN\)](#), [Australian Council of Social Service \(ACOSS\)](#), [Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association \(AHHA\)](#), [Australian Health Promotion Association \(AHPA\)](#), [Australian Institute of Health Innovation \(AIHI\)](#), [Australian Women's Health Network \(AWHN\)](#), [Australian Medical Students' Association \(AMSA\)](#), [Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation \(ANMF\)](#), [Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association \(APNA\)](#), [Australian Psychological Society \(APS\)](#), [CoHealth](#), [CRANApplus](#), [Doctors Reform Society \(DRS\)](#), [Friends of CAHA](#), [Healthy Futures](#), [Health Issues Centre \(HIC\)](#), [Health Nature Sustainability Research Group \(HNSRG\)](#), [Health Services Union \(HSU\)](#), [Kooverup Regional Health Service \(KRHS\)](#), [Medical Scientists Association of Victoria \(MSAV\)](#), [Pharmacists for the Environment Australia \(PEA\)](#), [Public Health Association of Australia \(PHAA\)](#), [Psychology for a Safe Climate \(PSC\)](#), [Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union \(QNMU\)](#), [Royal Australasian College of Physicians](#), [School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW](#), [School of Public Health, University of Sydney](#), [Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health \(SARRAH\)](#), [Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association \(VAHPA\)](#), [Women's Health East \(WHE\)](#), [Women's Health in the North \(WHIN\)](#)