



OUR CLIMATE, OUR HEALTH.

FRAMEWORK FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CLIMATE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR AUSTRALIA

BRIEFING NOTE - FEBRUARY 2019

Who is leading this work?

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) is the leading not-for-profit organisation in Australia working to raise awareness about the health risks of climate change and the health benefits of climate change mitigation strategies. CAHA is a unique alliance of multidisciplinary healthcare organisations to bring the voice, expertise, and concerns of the health sector to the issue of climate change. CAHA's membership includes professional groups from a range of disciplines, as well as health care service providers, institutions, academics, researchers, and consumers. Its' member groups represent over 400,000 health professionals across Australia.

Why climate and health?

Two leading international medical journals have described the climate crisis as a “health emergency”. The leading publication on global climate change and health research, the 2015 Health and Climate Commission, published by the international medical journal, *The Lancet*, found that climate change presents an “unacceptably high and potentially catastrophic risk to human health”. At the same time, **there is strong evidence to show that actions to address the climate crisis could be tremendously beneficial for human health and reduce health costs: these are ‘co-benefits’.**

There is mounting evidence that climate change is already impacting the health of the Australian community and increasing the cost to social and health care services. Yet we still do not have a national strategy to mitigate or adapt to these economic and human health impacts.

The policy gap

Australia has no national policy to respond to the health risks of climate change nor to act on these opportunities. A 2015 global survey of national climate change and health plans

revealed that Australia lags behind comparable countries in its response to the health risks of the climate crisis. The global climate agreement (the Paris Agreement) obliges nations to consider their citizens' 'right to health' in the context of climate policy. Without a nationally coordinated approach to policy on climate change and health, Australia will fail to meet its obligations to health under the Paris Agreement.

A national consultation with healthcare stakeholders in Australia in 2016/17 revealed deep concerns with regard to the current policy gap on climate change and health. 98% of respondents to a survey supported a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia as the mechanism to address this policy gap.

The Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia

The Climate and Health Alliance has led the [collaborative](#) development of a [Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia](#). The Framework provides the pathway to a comprehensive, integrated, national approach to addressing the health risks of climate change, to ensure policies to reduce emissions also reduce risks to health, to maximise co-benefits for health and well-being, and to support climate resilience in the health sector. A National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being based on this Framework will assist Australia in meeting its international obligations under the Paris Agreement.

The Framework is structured around seven key Areas of Policy Action.



This Framework has been hailed as a world first initiative and has been showcased in the international medical journal *The Lancet*. The Framework is endorsed by over 35 major Australian health stakeholder groups, including the Royal Australian College of General Practice, Public Health Association of Australia, Medical Scientists Association of Victoria, Australasian College of Health Service Management and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. You can read more about the consultation and process at: <http://www.caha.org.au/national-strategy-campaign-timeline>

The Framework has already informed the development of policy at local and state government levels in Australia, including in the development of a Human Health and Wellbeing Plan for the state of Qld (HCAP), and in the City of Melbourne Climate Change Mitigation Strategy.

The Australian Labor Party has declared that in government, it will develop a National Plan on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia based on this Framework. A video statement by Shadow Ministers Mark Butler and Catherine King is available here: <http://bit.ly/2ND9TQS>

If this proceeds, Australia will have one of the most comprehensive climate policy suites in the world.

The Opportunity

The Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia provides a comprehensive roadmap for policymakers to address the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human health. The Framework outlines key actions for all levels of government to address the health risks of climate change and promote health through climate action. Such policies will help limit the adverse impacts on the Australian community and support Australia's transition to a low carbon economy, as well as meeting Australia's obligations under the Paris Agreement.

By committing to a National Strategy on Climate, Health, and Well-being, the Australian Government has an opportunity to provide leadership to the international community and develop strong and positive policy for the health and well-being of Australians. Its adoption will provide governments with a good news story that can inspire the Australian community and build cooperation across sectors to address the impact of climate change.