

The National Strategy for
Climate, Health and Well-
being: a guide for
advocates

Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being Background

What it is: The Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia has been developed because there is a national policy failure to respond to the health risks of the climate crisis.

The climate crisis and health: *Health professionals have a responsibility, but also a tremendous opportunity, to act on the climate crisis.* 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’.

A National Strategy: Australia has no national policy to respond to the health risks 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 citizen ‘right to health’ in the context of climate policy. A National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being would assist Australia in meeting its international obligations under the Paris Agreement. It would provide 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 maximize co-benefits for health and well-being, and to support climate resilience in the health sector.

Campaign objective: The goal of the campaign is to achieve the development and implementation of a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia.

The process: The campaign will work to develop a consensus among healthcare stakeholders about the core elements of a National Strategy and to mobilise health professionals and organisations in pursuit of this policy goal.

In 2016, the first year of the campaign, campaign milestones were exceeded. A Core Organising Group and Support Committee have been established. A Discussion Paper was circulated to 350 healthcare stakeholders, and over 130 health professionals and organisations responded to the accompanying Survey to respond to the proposal for a National Strategy. A National Online Discussion Forum was held, followed by a historic Health Leaders Roundtable in Canberra in October. This brought together around 40 President, CEOs, and policy leaders of health organisations to discuss the key elements of a national strategy, and was attended by the Assistant Minister for Health, Shadow Minister for Health and Greens Party Leader.

Next steps: In 2017, we will develop the framework for the national strategy, and commence the training, advocacy and lobbying phase of the campaign. We will be running a three-day intensive education and training programme for 25 health professionals - to build a strong cohort of advocates across the health sector. There will also be lobbying actions, media efforts and an online campaign, to build political pressure for the Strategy.

Get involved! There are a number of ways to get involved in the Campaign:

1. Join the campaign team: email campaigns@caha.org.au
2. Nominate yourself or a colleague for the training program
3. Arrange a meeting with your MP or Senator
4. Sign up as a campaign partner or supporter
5. Ask your organisation to contribute \$ or human resources to support the campaign

Briefer: Meeting Your MP

This document sets out the suggested steps in arranging and conducting a meeting with an MP/ Senator about the campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health & Well-being for Australia.

The purpose of this meeting is to not only persuade your MP/Senator to support the development of a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being, but it also serves as an educational experience for you. You will be able to see the current political climate and learn how to better advocate for your cause. Visit the link listed below and search your postcode or town to find your local MP/Senator.

Look up the contact details for your MP and Senator here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zxLa9HQ6ElybBrKfMkvS3O9IniDXJ8W8UP86kxGoDGA/edit?usp=sharing>

ARRANGING THE MEETING

- Think about who would be useful to meet with. You will need a connection with the MP/ Senator – they may be your local MP or the MP of the area where you work. A strong personal connection is a better foundation for being a trusted voice to the MP/Senator.
- Do some brief desktop research about the MP/ Senator so that you have some knowledge of their background, interests etc. Read their maiden speech to get a sense of the issues they care about.
- If possible, organize a couple of interested colleagues to attend the meeting with you (ideally 2-4 people would attend).
- Note: MP/Senators have very busy schedules so you may not be able to get a meeting for a few months. Be patient and take the earliest meeting that is available.
- Phone the MP/ Senator's office to find out who is the appropriate contact person to schedule a meeting with. Introduce yourself briefly (eg. Jane Smith, a RN at XX hospital), that you would like to request a meeting with the MP/Senator about climate and health and would like to know who to address the email to.
- Send the email request to the contact (see the email templates).
- If you don't receive a response (which is highly likely!), follow up with a phone call one week later to secure a meeting date and time.
- You may need to make further calls/ emails until you have secured a meeting date and time. Be very polite and professional, but persistent!
- One week before the meeting, send the confirmation email (see email template).
- If there are several of you, discuss how you will approach the meeting and/or who will lead the discussion.

AT THE MEETING

- Arrive before your meeting time to discuss the roles of each of the people that will be meeting with the MP/Senator. Make sure to talk about what you might say and take down some notes so that you don't talk over one another and you're able to communicate your intended message.
- Be punctual, well-groomed and well-dressed.
- Please be aware that Parliamentarians have a lot of meetings in their schedule. Plan for the meeting lasting around 30 minutes and try to speak concisely to give them time to respond. This ensures you can have a conversation *with* them rather than talking *at* them.
- Briefly introduce yourselves and then you may like to *ask* the MP/Senator, about their understanding/views of climate change and health.
- *Tell your story* (3 parts):
 - *1. Story of self:* Relate why/ how you have become concerned about the health risks of climate change. Was there a specific incident or experience that motivated you to become involved in this issue?
 - *2. Story of us:* Explain why rapidly growing numbers of health professionals are concerned. (Link your story to the wider story of health professionals' engagement).
 - *3. Story of now:* briefly outline why action on climate change as a health protection measure is important and urgent, then lead into the campaign and the Strategy.
- Make sure you *listen* carefully to their response: What do they think? What could they do? What support could they offer? Designate one person as the 'scribe' to make sure that the main conversation points are recorded.
- Note: If you don't know something, tell the MP/Senator that you will follow-up with that information. **Do not** make anything up; you want to remain a credible source of information.
- At the end of the meeting, thank them for their time, and confirm/agree any follow-up actions.
- As you are leaving, ask the MP/Senator to get a photo with you and your colleagues for our newsletter and website.
- **Leave behind copies of:** Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being: Background and The Health Impacts of Climate Change in Australia.
- *Remember: If nothing else, by taking the time to arrange and meet with an MP/ Senator, you are raising awareness among politicians about climate change and health, and demonstrating the depth of commitment to this issue among health professionals. Many such meetings around the country all add up!*

ASK the MP/Senator to:

Note that most often it will be hard to get an MP/Senator to commit to any of these at the first visit and it might even be difficult to get through all the asks.

- Publicly declare their support for a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being
- Lobby their parliamentary colleagues / relevant Minister to support a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being
- Take steps to develop a policy position on a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being
- Work with healthcare stakeholders to develop a support for a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being

AFTER THE MEETING

- (If/as applicable): send an email thanking them for their time and following up on any actions/ providing any requested information etc. (see email template below).
- Complete the brief evaluation form – this will inform our campaign, and assist your colleagues with future meetings.
- The aim of meeting with your local MP is not only to demonstrate health professionals concern for this issue, but also to create a relationship and build rapport so that you and your colleagues are their go-to informants on climate and health issues. One meeting is useful, but further meetings and/or ongoing communication is even better!

Email Templates

INITIAL EMAIL

The following templates are provided as guides. Please feel free to modify or personalize it if/as you see fit.

Date

Dear [**contact's name**],

Thank you for your time on the phone today. My name is [**Jane Smith**], I am a [**Registered Nurse**] at [**XX Hospital**].

A: I am a constituent of the electorate of [**Insert electorate**], and would like to meet with [**name of MP/Senator**] as my [**Member of Parliament/ Senator**].

B: I would like to meet with you in the context of your portfolio of [**xxxx**].

I am part of a network of organisations and individuals who are seeking a national public policy response to address the risks to people's health from global warming and climate change. I understand that [**MP/Senator's name**] is interested in OR concerned about [**insert a specific, concise issue that they care about (1 sent)**]. We want to make sure that they are informed about our Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia.

A small group of my colleagues and I would like to meet to discuss our Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia. Climate change represents an urgent and potentially catastrophic threat to human health. We have seen [**insert a specific, if possible locally relevant event that has happened in health and climate change i.e. thunderstorm asthma (1-2 sentences.)**]

Health professionals are increasingly concerned that in Australia – unlike many other countries – there is no national strategy or response to this critical issue.

A broad alliance of health and medical organisations are calling for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia (see logos of supporting organisations below).

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Strategy with [**MP/Senator's name**] at [**his/her**] earliest convenience. We are available all weekdays except [**insert any day that you are not available; obviously try to be as flexible as possible**].

Many thanks for arranging this meeting with [**MP/Senator's name**]; we look forward to meeting with [**him/her**].

Yours sincerely,

[name and contact info]

CAMPAIGN SUPPORTER LOGOS

You can use the graphic below of Campaign Supporter logos as a footer to your email or letter.



CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Dear **[contact person name]**,

Thank you for your assistance in arranging the meeting with **[insert MP/Senator title and name]**. We look forward to our discussion with **[him/her]** on **[date]** at **[time]**.

There will be **[X]** members in our group.

[Insert ~2 sentences of mini-bio about each person]

In preparation for the meeting, we attach:

- Briefer re Campaign for a National Strategy on Climate, Health & Well-being Background

Yours sincerely,

[all names and primary person contact info, including mobile number]

FOLLOW-UP/THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear [*name of person you met with*],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with [*me, my colleagues, whoever went to the meeting*] on [*date*] to discuss the National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia.

As discussed, [*Insert 1-2 sent re what was talked about in the meeting*]

If they make a commitment:

A: We look forward to seeing [*whatever action that they said they would take*]

B: We strongly urge you to consider sharing this information about the National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia with your colleagues.

Again, thank you for your dedicated efforts to learn more about the health impacts of climate change. We look forward to continuing discussion about this issue.

Yours Sincerely,

[*names and contact info*]

Evaluation and Feedback

EVALUATION FORM

Congratulations for completing the meeting! Please take 5-10 minutes to provide your feedback. Your response will enable us to track which politicians have been approached, and will inform future meetings and the campaign.

Answer these questions and submit them via the Google Form here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGxx_XmCkZ3JxXaGxu9o6pOEWaYN6N7o0uAuKfGgjG6bTrHw/viewform

Appendix and Further Resources

Below are a few other resources that could also be helpful in your advocacy efforts. These will give you more insight on how to effectively communicate your message to MP/Senator's

American College of Physicians— <https://www.acponline.org/advocacy/advocacy-in-action/climate-change-toolkit>

**information on “greening” the health care sector and other education materials about climate and health interactions

Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association (AHHA)—

http://ahha.asn.au/sites/default/files/docs/policyissue/health_sector_advocacy_handbook_web.pdf

**specifics on advocacy tactics along with tips on how to be prepared to meet with elected officials

Australian Medical Students Association (AMSA)—

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/0B4vwtuB32opzjRzR29XM2owTVJ2SUh0dEZXcXYzajFDa1dhdEMzUnN6WEtTVXIWS2ctWUU>

**more information on climate change and human health interaction, some policy suggestions

Nature Conservation Council NSW (NCC)— <http://www.nature.org.au/media/172085/guide-to-meeting-your-local-mp-biodiversity-legislation-review.pdf>

**tips for contacting your local MP's and talking points about climate issues

Public Health Advocacy WA (Phiwa.org)— <http://www.phaiwa.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PHAIWA-Advocacy-in-Action-Toolkit-3rd-Edition.pdf>

**in this example, there are some good case studies included, these could be helpful for people if they have a hard time understanding why advocacy is important or they need to have the advocacy spark lit again

Southern Voices on Climate Change— <http://www.southernvoices.net/en/documents/key-documents/43-advocacy-toolkits/file.html>

**laid out steps to plan for a successful advocacy campaign, more in depth theory about advocacy