



NZ Climate & Health Council

www.orataiao.org.nz

MEDIA RELEASE

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16 health professional groups call for healthy climate action in NZ

Sixteen of NZ's most prestigious health professional organisations are today calling for New Zealand to take urgent action on climate change and health, a critical health issue.

These health groups represent tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, midwives, public health workers, and medical students, as well as all the medical and health sciences staff and students at Auckland and Otago Universities.

The 16 groups are calling on the NZ government, the health sector, and all levels of society to make an urgent transition to a low-emissions NZ, in ways that boost health and create a fairer society.

The release of the NZ 'Call for Action' coincides with a global day of action by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) including their global Statement '*Act now to reduce the damaging health impacts of climate change*' aimed at the December UN global climate negotiations in Paris.

Dr Alex Macmillan from the NZ Climate and Health Council says "leading health organisations all around the world are speaking out about the potentially devastating health impacts of climate change in this important year for global negotiations".

Well-planned action to reduce climate-damaging emissions could improve health and wellbeing, and help NZ ease pressure on the national health budget.

"Rapid moves to more walking, cycling and public transport; healthier diets; and energy efficient, warm homes and buildings will all help cut emissions while also reducing obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory disease" says Dr Macmillan.

However, health threats for New Zealanders if we fail to take the necessary action on climate change include illness and injury from heat waves and extreme weather events, changing patterns of infectious diseases, and wider health impacts from loss of livelihoods, mass population migration, and conflict.

"Māori, Pacific people, children, the elderly, and those on low incomes will face the biggest health impacts in the short-term in NZ, but very few people will be immune to the wide health and social threats of unchecked climate change" says Dr Macmillan.

"With urgent, health-centred climate action we can reduce this major health threat, as well as creating a healthy, fair and more resilient NZ and global community".

ENDS

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Alex Macmillan (alex.macmillan@otago.ac.nz) is a Public Health Physician and Senior Lecturer at the University of Otago and Co-Convenor of OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council.

Health professional signatories to the NZ Joint Call for Action on Climate Change and Health:

- OraTaiao: The NZ Climate and Health Council
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA)
- NZ Nurses Organisation
- Health Promotion Forum of NZ
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
- NZ College of Public Health Medicine
- NZ College of Midwives
- Public Health Association of NZ
- Colleges of Nurses Aotearoa NZ
- New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists
- The University of Auckland Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences
- The University of Otago Division of Health Sciences
- Auckland University Medical Students Association
- Medical Students for Global Awareness
- NZ Medical Students Association

Full text of the NZ 'Call for Action' on Climate Change and Health:

www.orataiao.org.nz

Royal Australasian College of Physicians Consensus Statement:

<http://doctorsforclimateaction.org>

About Climate Change and Health Implications for NZ:

Information is available in the following open access paper from the 2014 NZ Medical Journal: *'Health and equity impacts of climate change in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and health gains from climate action'*.

<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2014/vol-127-no-1406/6366>