**Climate increases risks to animals, humans**

**Dr Andrew Turner**

The house where I live now is just five kilometres from where I grew up. I remember when I was a boy at school in Melbourne in the early 1950s, frosty mornings were common.

There seems to be fewer now, and climate scientists tell us that by 2070, Melbourne may have none at all. For those of us taking notice, the effects of climate change are all around us.

I spent my working life advising the Victorian government on the health and welfare of the state's livestock animals and, by extension, its people, including 12 years as Chief Veterinary Officer. From the 1950s three cattle diseases, two capable of infecting humans, have been eradicated from the Australian cattle herd and numerous other diseases have been controlled. But since the 1990s, new diseases have emerged from wildlife, capable of infecting and killing horses, pigs, poultry and humans.

These diseases have emerged because wildlife and livestock have been forced into closer association by habitat reduction through intentional bush clearing, bushfires, drought and extreme summer temperature events. The health of animals, humans and our environment is impossible to fully separate. Over the past few decades, 60 to 70 per cent of new diseases affecting people came from animals. We are entangled and can never be completely pulled apart. That is why last week I joined 17 other former chief and senior veterinary officers of the states and commonwealth in asking the federal government to commit Australia to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner.

Australia is not taking enough effective action to mitigate the changes brought by escalating levels of greenhouse gases.

The changing climate is already harming Australians and is putting pressure on the health and welfare of our horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. It requires strong political leadership.

I worked with farmers for most of my career and it is clear they want to do the right thing on climate. The National Farmers Federation and Meat and Livestock Australia are committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and 2030 respectively.

Setting targets is important. It provides the framework for industry research and actions that will achieve the desired outcome.

It is time for the Morrison government to take the lead, to ensure Australia reaches national net zero carbon emissions by at least 2050. Will you join me in urging your parliamentary representatives to take urgent action on climate change?

**Dr Andrew Turner was the Chief Veterinary Officer of Victoria between 1988 and 2000.**