



CLIMATE^{AND}
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

6 March 2017
The Hon. Greg Hunt
Health Minister
Commonwealth of Australia

Dear Minister Hunt,

Congratulations on your appointment as Health Minister. The Climate and Health Alliance, and its members and partners, look forward to working with you to address the impacts of climate change on the health and wellbeing on the Australian community.

As you may be aware, the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA), has 28 member organisations, with member groups representing a large and diverse cross section (500,000+) of healthcare professionals, service providers, academics, and researchers.

We are working together with a broad health sector coalition (see OurClimate-Our Health supporters below) to identify priorities and concerns of healthcare stakeholders with respect to climate change.

Our coalition of healthcare stakeholders is keen to work with the government and the parliament on a national strategic response to the health impacts of climate change.

As you would know, climate change poses both risks and opportunities for population health in Australia. Depending on the level of ambition and strategies chosen by the Federal Government, Australia's climate policy will either negatively or positively drive health outcomes.

However, to date, human health has been afforded a lack of priority in Australia's national climate mitigation and adaptation policy. As such, the Australian community and health sector are underprepared to deal with the health risks associated with climate change, and equally, to capitalise on the benefits of mitigation actions.

As you are no doubt aware, many activities that cut greenhouse gas emissions will also improve health and vice versa. Many strategies to reduce emissions have significant and immediate benefits for health, while the climate benefits accumulate in the longer term. For example, emissions reduction strategies that reduce air pollution will help reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases, heart attack and stroke. Shifting to more active and public forms of transport reduces emissions, while the associated increased physical activity helps tackle obesity, diabetes, depression and some cancers.

Despite these risks and opportunities associated with climate action, a recent global survey reveals Australia lags comparable countries when it comes to protecting the health of its citizens from climate change.

And now, with the Paris Agreement, we have a new impetus to include public health consideration in climate policy. As you may know, the Paris Climate Agreement obliges nations to consider its citizen's 'right to health' in the context of climate policy.

For Australia to meet its obligations under this international convention, it is increasingly clear there needs to be leadership at the national level to ensure climate policies are developed using a 'health lens'.

We are working with healthcare stakeholders to develop a framework for a *National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being*. Such a strategy will enable Australia to adequately respond to the risks to health from climate change, support the health sector to build climate resilience and transition to low carbon operations, promote education and awareness about climate change and health, strengthen climate and health research, and ensure climate policies are designed with health risks and benefits in mind.

We have conducted an extensive consultation with healthcare stakeholders on this issue throughout 2016, commencing with the dissemination of a [Discussion Paper: Towards a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia](#), which has attracted international attention and strong support from health stakeholders nationally. We provide for your information a [report of the responses to the Discussion Paper](#), a summary of themes arising from a nine day [online discussion forum](#) and report from our [historic climate, health and wellbeing roundtable meeting of health leaders in Canberra in October 2016](#).

We would be pleased to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss the key elements of the National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia, and to explore how this might support the government's efforts to protect the health and wellbeing of people in Australia from the threats of climate change.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Kind regards,

Fiona Armstrong
Executive Director
Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)

On behalf of the OurClimate-OurHealth supporters:



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