

The National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being: A Guide for Advocates



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ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

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 citizens’ ‘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 maximise co-benefits for health and well-being, and to support climate resilience in the health sector. A national consultation revealed 98% of surveyed health professionals support a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia.

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, parliamentarians, policymakers and the wider community about the core elements of a National Strategy and to mobilise health professionals and organisations to advocate for the realisation of this policy goal.

In 2016, the first year of the campaign, campaign milestones were exceeded. A Core Organising Group and Support Committee was 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.

In 2017 we developed the Framework for the National Strategy, and delivered the training, advocacy and lobbying phrase of the campaign. This involved a three-day intensive education and training program for 25 health professionals, a one-day training program for 15 health professionals and two 2-hour online advocacy workshops. These trainings helped to build a strong cohort of advocates across the health sector. In addition to this, support was provided on an ongoing basis to healthcare professionals to advocate in their workplace to build support for the strategy and to meet with their MP/Senator. Photos of MP/Senator meetings to date can be found at: <http://www.ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au/petition>. These training and advocacy actions were complemented by media efforts and an online campaign to build political pressure for the strategy.

In 2018 we provided further training for health professionals to become Climate-Health Champions, continued engagement with MPs and Senators and continued advocacy efforts among healthcare workplaces.

We worked with NCCARF and drew on the Framework to develop a [Human Health and Wellbeing Climate Adaptation Plan \(H-CAP\)](#) for the state of Queensland. We shared the Framework with state and territory governments, and with the international community at the Global Climate Action Summit in California and COP24 in Katowice, Poland.

In 2019, we will work to provide briefings to as many political candidates and members of parliament as possible, while we continue to recruit and train Climate-Health Champions and expand the network of health professionals advocating for climate action across Australia.

Get involved!

- Sign up at www.ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au to express your support for this campaign
- Gather support in your workplace through collecting signatures in support of the campaign: <http://www.ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au/petition>
- Email your MP / Senator to build their awareness on the importance of acting on climate to protect health: <https://climateandhealth.good.do/act-on-climate-to-protect-health/email-your-local-mp-and-senators/>
- Make a donation or ask your organisation to support the campaign: <https://ourclimateourhealth-caha.nationbuilder.com/donate>

CONSTITUENT MEETINGS

As a constituent, you have the right to request meetings with your elected parliamentarians about issues that concern you or your community. This means you can play a key role in this campaign through meeting with your parliamentary representative/s. By meeting with your local federal Member of Parliament (MP) or Senator you can help make them aware that action on health and climate change is important to the members of their electorate. After all, it's you who decides with your vote if they continue in their position or not! You can learn more about the importance of health advocacy at:

<http://www.phaiwa.org.au/about-public-health-advocacy/>

We recognise that meeting with an MP or Senator may be a new experience for you. So this guide explains how you can schedule, run and follow up on a successful meeting.

TIMING OF MEETINGS

When is the best time to have these meetings? It's best to have these meetings as soon as you can. Try to find a time in the upcoming weeks that suits yourself and your MP/Senator. MPs and Senators can be very busy, so we encourage you to be polite, professional and persistent as you organise a meeting with them.

This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the Strategy and to identify the key questions and concerns your MP/Senator may have. We're seeking commitment from the MP/Senator for the following:

- public declaration of their support for the adoption of a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia;
- lobbying of their parliamentary colleagues / relevant Minister to support the adoption of 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 within their party; and
- publicly support the National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being by;
 - agreeing to a photo of them declaring their support to be displayed on the campaign website;
 - agreeing to add their name to the pledge on the campaign website; and/or
 - agreeing to add their voice to the media and parliamentary discussion on the topic.

STEP 1: WHO'S MY REPRESENTATIVE?

You can look up the contact details for your MP and Senator by clicking on the link below:

- After identifying who your local MP/Senator is, do some brief desktop research about them so that you have some knowledge of their background, interests etc. Their maiden speech will usually be on their website, and this is a great way of understanding what they're passionate about. See if you can find any media pieces by or about them to gain a further understanding of their views.
- If possible, arrange for a couple of interested colleagues to attend the meeting with you (ideally 2-4 people would attend).

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zxLa9HQ6ElybBrKFmKvS3O9IniDXJ8W8UP86kxGoDGA/edit#gid=0>

STEP 2. ARRANGING THE MEETING

It can take some time to lock in a meeting with your MP/Senator, so start making meeting arrangements as soon as you possibly can!

If you feel confident it's best to begin with a phone call to your MP/Senator's office. Their number will usually be on their website. Explain briefly who you are, and why you wish to organise a meeting. Remember, as a constituent you have every right to do this!

During your call ask to speak to the MP/Senator's diary manager. If the diary manager asks you to send a follow up email, you can use the email template in this guide. If they are unavailable, ask for their email so that you can contact them that way.

In your email, reiterate the request for a meeting and provide a copy of the Framework. The Framework can be found at <http://www.caha.org.au/national-strategy-climate-health-wellbeing>.

You might not receive a response straight away – MP/Senator offices can be very busy! If you haven't heard back in *one week* follow up with a phone call to the office or diary manager if possible.

You may need to make further calls/emails until you have secured a meeting date and time. Be very polite and professional, but persistent!

STEP 3. PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- One week before the arranged meeting, send the confirmation email (see email template).
- If there are several of you attending, discuss beforehand how you will approach the meeting – for example, who will lead the meeting? Who will be the scribe?
- Print some copies of the supporting documents to leave with your MP/Senator – these can be found at <http://www.ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au/petition>
- Read the Framework for the Strategy in detail and seek clarification on any points that you're unsure on. It is crucial to present a professional and united front.
- Ensure that you have a fully charged smart phone or camera available.

It's important that the meeting allows the MP/Senator to understand who you are, why you care about the effects of climate change on health, and why the Strategy is so crucial to addressing these effects. Below is a suggestion for how you might like to approach this discussion, by preparing your 'Story of Self':

- Prepare to tell your *story of self* following the three-part guide below. If more than one person is attending, discuss your stories of self beforehand so that one person can tell a concise, combined version of your stories. Remember, time will be short, try to allow as much time as possible for the MP/Senator to engage in conversation.
 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.

STEP 4. ATTENDING THE MEETING

- Parliamentarians tend to have a lot of meetings packed tightly in their schedule. Arrive before the allocated start time, and plan for the meeting lasting around 30 minutes unless advised prior.
- Briefly introduce yourselves and tell *your story of self* in a concise manner – leave as much time as possible for *them* to do the talking!
- Ask the MP/Senator for their opinion on the Strategy, and have the nominated scribe note the key comments and concerns.
- Make sure you *listen* carefully to their response. An important part of this campaign is for us to understand what different MPs/Senators think about climate and health.
- Ask questions: What do they think? What could they do? What support could they offer? If you're unsure of something, consider asking open questions such as:
 - Can you tell us more about your concerns regarding.....?
 - You mentioned Are you able to elaborate on that?

Note: If you don't know something, tell the MP/Senator that you're unsure and will follow-up with that information. Most people prefer honesty in this case, and you want to remain a credible source of information. After your meeting, send details of any questions to the Climate and Health Alliance's Executive Director Fiona Armstrong at fiona.armstrong@caha.org.au

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 the adoption of a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being.
- Lobby their parliamentary colleagues / relevant Minister to support the adoption of a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being.
- Work with healthcare stakeholders to further develop and support a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being
- 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 if they consent to a photo with you and your colleagues for our newsletter and website.

Remember: Don't be disheartened by a seemingly negative or luke-warm response. 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!

STEP 5. AFTER THE MEETING

- Send an email thanking them for their time and following up on any actions/ providing any requested information etc (see email template). Use this opportunity to schedule a second meeting if appropriate and to encourage open and ongoing communication.
- Complete the brief evaluation form (link at the end of this document) – this will inform our campaign and assist your colleagues with future meetings.

INITIAL EMAIL TEMPLATE

The following templates are provided as guides. Please feel free to modify or personalise it if/as you see fit. Please also check this link to ensure you address the MP/Senator correctly:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members/Guidelines for Contacting Senators and Members/How to address Senators and Members](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members/How_to_address_Senators_and_Members)

Date

Dear _____

My name is [**Jane Smith**], I am a [**Registered Nurse**] at [**XX Hospital**]. As a constituent of the electorate of [**Insert electorate**], I would like to meet with you as my [**Member of Parliament/ Senator**].

I am part of a network of health 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.

From **[media coverage regarding xyz OR the content of your maiden speech]** I understand that you **[add specific personalised detail here if applicable]**.

My colleagues **[insert full name and profession of colleagues here]** and I would like to meet to discuss the *National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being*, due to be formally released at Parliament House on Thursday, 22 June 2017.

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

A broad alliance of health and medical organisations are calling for the adoption of 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 you personally at your earliest convenience. We are available to meet at your electorate office all weekdays except ***[insert any day that you are not available; obviously try to be as flexible as possible]***.

We look forward to an opportunity to discuss this important matter with you.

Yours faithfully,

[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; and
- National Strategy on Climate, Health & Well-being.

Yours faithfully,

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

FOLLOW-UP/THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear _____

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 faithfully,

[**names and contact info**]

THANK YOU

Thank you for making the time to make such an important contribution to this campaign. Every individual's voice is crucial to bringing awareness to our elected representatives that the impact on climate change on our health is important. Please share your experience with your friends, family and colleagues – your story might be just the inspiration they need to request a meeting with their MP/Senator to add their voice to the chorus!

EVALUATION & FEEDBACK FORM

This is one of the most important parts! 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

Information on “greening” the healthcare sector and other education materials about climate and health interactions.

Website:

<https://www.acponline.org/advocacy/advocacy-in-action/climate-change-toolkit>

Nature Conservation Council NSW (NCC)

Tips for contacting your local MPs and talking points about climate issues.

Website:

<http://www.nature.org.au/media/172085/guide-to-meeting-your-local-mp-biodiversity-legislation-review.pdf>

Public Health Advocacy WA (Phiwa.org)

Learn more about why advocacy is so important

Website:

<http://www.phaiwa.org.au/about-public-health-advocacy/> .

Southern Voices on Climate Change

Steps to plan for a successful advocacy campaign and more in-depth theory about advocacy.

Website:

<http://www.southernvoices.net/en/documents/key-documents/43-advocacy-toolkits/file.html>