



CLIMATE AND  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE

## **Time for Health Minister to address climate change as major threat to health**

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Australia will fail to fulfill its obligations under the Paris climate change agreement if the Federal Government continues to ignore the health risks associated with climate change, experts warn.

A new report developed by Australian health groups and supported by leading health and medical experts outlines how Australia overlooks the health implications of climate change, leaving Australians vulnerable and the health sector underprepared.

Nobel Laureate for Medicine Professor Peter Doherty says the Health Department insists climate change mitigation is not of relevance to the portfolio, despite world health agencies naming climate change as the greatest threat to global health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

“Heatwaves, heavy and sudden rainfall, flash flooding, and explosive bushfires pose obvious and serious risks to people’s health, both during the disaster and in the weeks and months following. These events are increasing as average temperatures rise,” Professor Doherty said.

Professor Doherty says Australia has no choice but to act.

“As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Australia is obliged to improve population health on top of limiting global warming. It is increasingly clear that no amount of adaptation will protect people’s health if we fail to lessen climate change.

“It’s time the Australian health minister got involved in climate policy.”

Climate change and health researcher and Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) president Dr Liz Hanna says the government has a huge opportunity to improve the health of Australians while tackling climate change at the same time.

“Health agencies in the United States are using climate change data to pinpoint the most vulnerable communities and ensure the resources and plans are in

place to protect them. They are supporting health services and communities to develop climate resilience, and educating their health workforces so they are prepared to respond. Why isn't Australia capitalising on its world-leading research on climate change and health and doing the same thing?" Dr Hanna said.

A recent global survey shows Australia lags behind comparable countries like the USA and UK when it comes to addressing the health impacts of climate change.

"Deaths attributable to climate change are estimated at 250,000-400,000 globally each year already. Australia will be responsible for unnecessary deaths if it doesn't take strong climate action now," Dr Hanna said.

In an Australian first, CAHA is leading a national discussion with 300 healthcare stakeholders, academics, researchers and interested parties regarding the urgent need for the Federal Government to develop and implement a national strategy for Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia.

To download a copy of the Discussion Paper: *Towards a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia*, visit <http://caha.org.au/campaigns/national-strategy-climate-health-wellbeing/>

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