



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE



Doctors for the
Environment
Australia

Media release

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Doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, health organisations and health super funds urged to quit coal, oil and gas

- Landmark report urges Australia's 600,000 plus health workers to divest
- Health sector has an obligation to protect health
- Health is being undermined by fossil fuels
- Renewable energy is a healthier, safer investment

A new landmark report launched today is urging Australia's more than 600,000 health professionals, including doctors and nurses, as well as health organisations and health superannuation funds to quit their investments in coal, gas, and oil because of the serious harms fossil fuels pose to human health.

Investing in Health is produced by leading advocacy groups the Climate and Health Alliance and Doctors for the Environment Australia, with a foreword by Laureate Professor Nicholas J Talley, President Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

The report which calls on health practitioners to withdraw investments from fossil fuels on health and financial grounds states fossil fuels are major contributors to air pollution and climate change.

Air pollution in Australia causes respiratory and cardiac diseases and is responsible for more than 3,000 deaths each year – more than twice the annual road toll. Globally, there are seven million premature deaths each year from air pollution.

There are also the profound risks to health from climate change, driven in large part by the combustion of fossil fuels, which if left unchecked, will undermine the last half-century of global health gains.

Extreme weather, increased spread of disease, and damage to the natural environment all harm people's health, destabilise social systems, and contribute to rising death rates (climate change is already estimated to cause 400,000 deaths each year, largely in the developing world).

Health practitioners have a long history of protecting public health. Action against the tobacco industry is a recent example, and highlights the significant impact of this large group of respected professionals and their organisations.

Prominent health bodies such as the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the British Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association have already changed their investment strategy to exclude the fossil fuel industry.

The report also highlights the strong relative performance of fossil-free investment portfolios, and the financial risks to investment portfolios with coal, oil, and gas assets. However it emphasises that it does not constitute financial product advice.

Australia's health super funds include HESTA (Health Employees Superannuation Trust) and First State Super.

The report will be launched on **Sunday 17 April** at the annual Doctors for the Environment Australia conference, [iDEA16](#), in Brisbane by CAHA Vice President Dr Peter Sainsbury, DEA's spokesperson Dr Helen Redmond and the RACP's Australasian Faculty of Public Health President-Elect Professor Lynne Madden.

Key speakers at the conference include international campaigner and founder of 350.org, Bill McKibben. He will speak via video link on how the world is now waking up to the devastating health impacts of climate change.

Quotes

CAHA Vice President Dr Peter Sainsbury

"Health professionals have a record of leadership when it comes to removing the social licence of health damaging industries."

"Health professionals and their representative organisations have led movements to divest from tobacco, weapons, and gambling industries - it's now time for health leadership on divesting from fossil fuels."

"Climate change, driven by the burning of coal, oil and gas, threatens our ability to provide healthy nutritious food, clean air and clean water for humans all over the world."

DEA report editor and DEA spokesperson, Dr Helen Redmond

"We are health workers and the choice to end any links to fossil fuel assets is an ethical one. Investing in industries that cause harm to human health is incompatible with our duty of care."

"The science is crystal clear: climate change is a public health emergency. We can no longer continue to burn coal and oil and gas."

"By screening fossil fuel investments from their portfolios, health professionals and their organisations can help drive growth in low carbon and renewable energy assets. Fossil free investing is an important public health intervention."

International campaigner and founder of 350.org, Bill McKibben

"It's not just increasing outbreaks of disease like the zika virus that we need to be concerned about. The much greater toll comes from the persistent environmental pollution of fossil fuels."

"The issues are acute and they will get more acute as the temperatures continue to rise. That is why health professionals need to be doing everything they can to help combat climate change now and that includes divesting from polluting fossil fuels."

Press conference

Sunday 17 April, 10.20am to 10.40am, main lobby, Prentice Building room 216, University of Queensland, St. Lucia Campus, Brisbane.

To RSVP or for queries, contact Carmela Ferraro, 04107 03074.

For media comment

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Resources

To download the report, visit www.healthyinvestments.org (report can be accessed after the end of the embargo)

[iDEA16 conference](#)

About CAHA

The Climate and Health Alliance is a national coalition of 30 health and medical groups advocating for health in the context of climate change. [Visit www.caha.org.au](http://www.caha.org.au)

About DEA

DEA is an independent health advocacy organisation of medical doctors raising awareness of the link between health and the environment <http://dea.org.au>

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