



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

CALL FOR HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION NOW

Health groups are calling on Australian governments to implement a set of specific measures to address the impact of climate change on health.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) say any political stalemate over strategies to reduce global warming must not be allowed to distract attention from the very real effects that climate change will have on health and action that should be taken now.

According to the RACP's spokesperson on climate change, Professor Robyn McDermott, "The impact of climate change on human health is a matter of serious concern. The time has come for specific actions to reduce this impact. Action must also be taken to help people adapt living and working practices in the light of the changes that are the result of an increasing carbon footprint. Working with the Public Health Association of Australia on a population-based approach, we have identified a number of actions that can and should be taken immediately".

Michael Moore, CEO of the PHAA added, "It is important to understand that there will be – and already are – health impacts of gradual climate change and of extreme weather-related events. While the political debate continues, people concerned about health shouldn't be sitting on their hands", he said "There are things that we can do now that will have a positive impact."

The two organizations point out that forthcoming elections in South Australia and Tasmania provide ideal opportunities to raise these issues with candidates, MPs and governments. "We will be working together to reach candidates at these elections and to ask them to commit to taking action," said Mr Moore.

Immediate actions should include:

- Committing to a green health care system with a reduced carbon footprint
- Developing active (healthy) transport systems
- Supporting a national population policy for a sustainable population
- Understanding the significance of a Healthy Food, Healthy Environment approach and developing a national food policy
- Recognising coal as a health hazard and supporting alternative energy sources like wind and solar power

"Health leaders should take the first steps in their own back yards," said Professor McDermott. "As they start to reduce the carbon footprint of health systems, they can use their own achievements to influence others. The important issue is that there are things that can be done now and commitments from across the political and bureaucratic spectrum can help to reduce the adverse health impacts of climate change."

ENDS

About the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 10,500 physicians and 4,000 trainees - often referred to as 'specialists' - across Australia and New Zealand. It represents more than 25 medical specialties including paediatrics, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, and public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, rehabilitation medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the well-being of patients.

www.racp.edu.au

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