



**PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**  
of Australia Inc  
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Dear Editor

**Re: Your climate, your health**

There is near unanimous scientific consensus that the rise in greenhouse gases due to human actions is accelerating changes in the world's climates. There is also near unanimous political acceptance of this fact. This is despite its undesirable inferences to the proposed plans for economic growth based on uninterrupted high levels of consumerism and energy use.

There is also scientific evidence supporting the deleterious impact of climate change on our ecosystems and built environments. These changes will have a negative impact on human health.

There is global evidence of the impact of climate change on the environment and on human health – deaths from cyclones, floods, storms, and the effects of these physical events on the availability of food. However, to date we have failed to take significant notice of these world environmental tragedies

We hear, but do not respond to the changes that have and continue to bring about interruptions to historical patterns of microbial proliferation, vector-pathogen relationships, and the geographical and seasonal extent of diseases. We see these not as climate change effects, and certainly something that will not visit “our back yard”.

So it seems a difficult concept for people to understand that climate change has and will continue to affect whole patterns of agriculture, that there will be impaired crop growth in some regions, that the price for fresh fish, meat, vegetables and fruit will rise, and that there will be wholesale changes in our capacities to undertake the types of agriculture that have been endemic to specific regions around Australia.

It seems even harder to imagine the sequelae of climate change – the increased social dislocation that will occur with the loss of livelihoods, further rural-urban drift and subsequent adverse health impacts, including increases in mental health issues.

One talks of adaptation to climate change, acknowledging that it is occurring, and also that there will be “winners” and “losers” as we adapt to the inevitable changes. But as yet this nation has not developed the an understanding of the reality of climate change, that it WILL impact every individual, nor have we developed an understanding as to how we will handle the predicted negative impact on health outcomes. While the order of magnitude of the effect of such changes on Australian's health has been indicated, the seriousness of the impacts has not been embraced.

Sophisticated modeling techniques have been able to clearly identify the impact of climate change on our society. We have a number of internationally acclaimed experts who have been forecasting this crisis for many years. How long are Australians going to wait for the Governments of Australia to listen to their advice and to respond to these predictions by developing sensible and informed policies that will immediately contribute to reversing the projected trend?

Guidelines, policies and appropriate regulations must be developed as a matter of urgency in order that we might redress the projected impacts of climate change, particularly the health impacts. For it IS “in our backyards.”

Yours faithfully,

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