

Friday 12 August 2016

Mr Josh Frydenberg
Minister for Environment and Energy
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Frydenberg,

We would like to welcome you to your new role as minister for the environment and energy. Both portfolio areas significantly influence public health. We therefore offer you a short briefing and some detailed documents on the public health implications of the decisions you will be making within your portfolio.

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia and works to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. The Association seeks better population health outcomes based on addressing the ecological and social determinants of health, promoting social equity principles and taking a disease prevention approach.

First we would like to draw your attention to the role the environment and a well-functioning ecosystem plays in supporting human wellbeing and health directly by supporting (nutrient and chemical cycles, soil provision and replenishment), provisioning (clean air, fresh water, material resources), regulating (air and water quality, climate, flood control, disease control, waste / pollution management), spiritual/cultural (aesthetics, wonder, recreation) and indirectly by underpinning economic prosperity. See attachment 1 for a diagrammatic view.

Secondly, there is a strong link between our energy choices as a society and our health. As you will see from the attached Health and Energy Choices papers, and the Coal in the Hunter Report, the fossil fuel industries have immediate direct effects on the health of nearby residents and longer term effects via global warming. In contrast, the health risks, environmental impacts and carbon emissions associated with renewable energies are much less, making a rapid transition to renewable energies a great opportunity for health gain. We also attach the PHAA Policies on Safe Climate and Health Effects of Fossil Fuels.

In this context, the discussions you are opening with State and Territory ministers about energy will be very important in setting the policy scope for Australians' health as well as their energy access into the next few decades. By creating a comprehensive suite of integrated policies to address our energy needs and to mitigate global warming, you will also be establishing a strong framework for a much healthier Australia.

Australia desperately needs sensible government leadership to help move us to a low greenhouse emitting energy driven economy. You are creating the opportunity to do this. We urge you to grasp this opportunity and we look forward to working with you in such an endeavour.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to brief you more broadly on these issues.

Kind regards,



Michael Moore BA, Dip Ed, MPH
Chief Executive Officer
Public Health Association of Australia



Peter Tait MBBS FRACGP MClimChng
Convenor
PHAA Ecology & Environment Special Interest Group

Attachments:

1. Health and Energy Choices: Background Briefing Paper (Diagrammatic view)
2. Health and Energy Choices: Position Paper
3. Coal in the Hunter Report
4. PHAA Safe Climate Policy
5. PHAA Health Effects of Fossil Fuels Policy