



HEALTHY CLIMATE FUTURE



The Healthy Climate Future Public Advocacy Campaign

Climate change poses a major risk to our healthcare systems.

Doctors are seeing the impacts firsthand and are calling on the Federal Government to release a plan to prepare our healthcare systems for the impacts of climate change.

At the same time, we want to play our part in the solutions. We're advocating for support to ensure the healthcare system can reduce its own climate footprint. We need a healthcare system that is both climate ready and climate friendly.

Recommendations

Medical colleges have joined together to call on political leaders to commit to ensuring our healthcare system is:

Climate ready

1. Create and fund a National Climate Change and Health Strategy that will enable our healthcare system to build climate resilience, including
 - ✦ development of climate risk and vulnerability assessments and locally led disaster planning for the healthcare system; acknowledging that rural and remote communities are at particular risk
 - ✦ adaptation and resilience plans which acknowledge, support, and are guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership
 - ✦ equipping health and medical professionals with information, tools and resources to support them to anticipate, prepare for and respond to climate risks
 - ✦ establishment of a surge health and medical workforce for deployment in response to extreme weather events
 - ✦ being informed by the experience of COVID-19 and the limitations and vulnerabilities of the healthcare system to significant shocks
2. Create and fund a National Climate Change and Health Sustainability Unit to oversee the implementation of the Strategy
3. Invest in a national Climate Change and Health Resilience Research Fund to identify resilience strategies suited to our healthcare system

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Climate friendly

1. Establish a Climate Friendly Health System Innovation Fund to provide grants to local health services for emissions reduction and sustainability initiatives
2. Include a plan for equitably decarbonising healthcare, to achieve net zero emissions in healthcare by 2040 in a funded National Climate Change and Health Strategy

In addition, we join many others, including the business community, farmers and community groups, in calling for an urgent transition to net-zero emissions across all economic sectors to address the underlying causes of climate change, with support to affected communities.

We believe Australia must respect and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge in its climate change adaptation and resilience plans.

These recommendations are based on research commissioned by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and endorsed by ten medical colleges.

Policy context

Australian state and territory governments have adopted varying approaches to climate change and health, with different emissions targets and inconsistent approaches to health. A National Climate Change and Health Strategy is needed to align policy and funding, and deliver a coordinated approach to addressing climate risks and opportunities in healthcare systems.

Australia should look to the successes of our others, such as Greener NHS and NHS Innovation, for a plan to achieve net zero emissions in healthcare by 2040. The UK has shown it is possible to implement ambitious initiatives to decarbonise healthcare, support sustainability innovation and provide leadership for a healthy future.

Case studies show that disaster planning is most effective when it is led locally. Rural and remote communities most at risk of extreme weather events must be empowered to develop solutions that work for them to deliver climate ready health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that rapid system change is possible in the face of serious threat. Our recovery presents an opportunity to recover with climate resilient and environmentally sustainable healthcare.

We need to act on climate change now to reduce its impacts and build a healthy climate future.