



CLIMATE AND  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE



**DECLARATION- The CAHA Declaration outlines further the shared position of the members of the Alliance, including the Australian Association of Social Workers.**

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA – referred to in this document as “the Alliance”) is an alliance of organisations and people in the health sector who wish to see the threat of climate change and ecological degradation to human health addressed through prompt policy action.

As health professionals, health providers and health consumers we are committed to action to limit further global warming.

This commitment is based on the understanding that further global warming poses grave risks to human health and biodiversity and if left unchecked, threatens the future of human civilisation. As health stakeholders we recognise we have a particular responsibility to the community in advocating for public policy that will promote and protect human health.

We recognise the important role of civil society in advocating for the restoration of a safe climate. We also recognise as health leaders we have the capacity to influence our political representatives to take effective action. In taking this action we are responding to the call from the 2009 Lancet Health and Climate Change report for a public health movement that frames the threat of climate change for humankind as a health issue.

In advocating for policy action to prevent further global warming, we recognise that this must include dramatic and urgent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and removal of excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to restore a safe climate.

The Alliance recognises policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have the potential to bring important public health benefits. Actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can not only reduce the health risks associated with climate change and environmental harm, but can also improve health outcomes, and reduce costs through increases in physical activity, improved air quality, and improved diet. There are also strong economic, environmental,

social and health benefits for countries that reduce emissions.

We recognise that, like the ecosystem, all dimensions of climate change are intrinsically linked, and that action to reduce the health risks from climate change requires action across a range of policy areas and sectors. We acknowledge the contribution and responsibility of governments, businesses, civil society, the community, and individuals in taking action to reduce climate risk.

In making this declaration, we endorse the Aim, Objectives and Priorities of the Climate and Health Alliance outlined below:

### **AIM**

The Alliance aims to protect and promote health by acting, encouraging and empowering organisations and individuals in the health care sector and the wider community to contribute to developing effective political, sectoral and community responses to climate change.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The Alliance will work to develop effective sectoral and national policy and other national level responses for preventing, mitigating, and adapting to, the health effects of climate change.

It will:

- Advocate for urgent policy action to minimise further global warming and protect the community from the adverse consequences of climate change and environmental damage
- Collaborate with others to identify and remove structural barriers to effective responses to climate change and develop sustainable practices in health care
- Engage and inform health professionals, policy makers, and the community about: the risks posed to human health from climate change; and the solutions available to reduce risks and improve health
- Share information and resources about health and climate issues through a network of individuals and organisations

### **PRIORITIES**

The priorities of the Climate and Health Alliance are to:

#### 1. Health

- Advocate for strong emissions reductions to reduce the current and future health impacts and risks associated with increasing global temperature, sea level rise, and food and water insecurity
- Act within the health sector to initiate, examine and implement changes which result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the sector
- Encourage improvements in the environmental footprint of the health care sector through: ethical, environmentally sustainable procurement practices;

reducing energy and water use; reducing waste; and using clean renewable energy

- Engage and inform the health care sector, policy makers and the community about the opportunities for reducing risks, reducing costs and improving health through emissions abatement
- Advocate for the inclusion of mandatory criteria in the accreditation of healthcare facilities for the use of energy and water, production and recycling of waste, standards for energy efficiency, sustainable procurement practices, and environmental committees in all health care institutions
- Encourage the implementation of policies and strategies that strengthen the ability of the health care sector to reduce its contribution to, as well as effectively adapt to, climate change

## 2. Research and development

- Engage and inform health care stakeholders about opportunities to undertake research into the health effects of climate change and the health benefits of prevention and mitigation
- Encourage collaborative approaches at regional and national levels to climate change health risk and impact assessments
- Advocate for increased investment in research about climate change risk mitigation, and adaptation assessed by those with demonstrated expertise in climate change and health

## 3. Energy

- Recognise an urgent transition from fossil fuels to clean renewable energy is needed to achieve a zero emissions stationary energy supply

## 4. Transport

- Encourage healthy transport through the development of active transport systems that support cycling and walking and expanding clean renewable energy powered public transport systems

## 5. Built environment

- Encourage the refurbishment and building of health care infrastructure to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions
- Promote the development of sustainable buildings (energy producing, water harvesting, use of recyclable biodegradable materials, minimising/re-using waste) through improved domestic, commercial and urban planning

## 6. Food and agriculture

- Support the procurement of healthy, sustainably sourced food in health care settings with minimal embedded carbon
- Promote more sustainable land use and healthy agricultural practices (including regulating the use of pesticides and hormones in the production of food) and reductions in the sector's emissions (carbon dioxide, nitrogen, methane)

## 7. Education

- Advocate for the improvement of climate literacy at all education levels, including among health professionals

## 8. Water

- Advocate for the protection and conservation of a healthy and sustainable

water supply

#### 9. Sustainable population

- Encourage the development of a sustainable population policy for Australia that recognises our fragile ecology while respecting and protecting the rights of refugees

#### 10. Citizen engagement

- Encourage scientists and policy makers to engage with the community on the issue of climate change - politicians and policy makers need to be upfront with the community on the science of climate change and the urgency of action required

#### 11. Global justice

- Recognise the current impacts of climate change are the result of historical emissions largely from wealthy industrialised nations. As a result Australia has an obligation not only to cut emissions, but also to assist poorer nations and their citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable to climate change.
- Recognise the need for migration to escape climate change impacts – this must be recognised in humane and fair refugee policies for Australia which acknowledge the international human right to seek asylum.
- Encourage the development and implementation of sustainable population policies in developing nations
- Advocate for the consideration of climate change and health issues in impact assessments for major projects, both domestically and internationally
- Recognise anthropogenic climate change creates intergenerational inequity
- Acknowledge the stewardship of our land by Indigenous people as traditional owners and the disproportionate impacts of climate change on Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

#### 12. Biodiversity

- Recognise climate change is having severe adverse impacts on biodiversity, on which humans depend as a life support system (including food, clean air and medicines)
- Advocate for the value of biodiversity and of ecosystem services to be recognised in public policy decision making
- Promote the importance of maintaining old growth forests and the adverse impacts continued deforestation practices are having on biodiversity and climate change

#### 13. Adaptation

- Advocate for effective and sustainable adaptation responses by communities to the full range of health impacts linked to climate change