

POSITION STATEMENT: CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

As a health promotion organisation, the Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT Inc. (HCCA) recognises that climate change presents profound risks to health. Climate change will affect the health of many people in many nations, and will affect some people more than others. For example, rising temperatures increase the risk of heat-related death and illness and broaden the distribution of some communicable diseases, particularly those that are water borne and/or vector borne. Changes to rainfall bring droughts and floods, which can result in disease and death. Food production changes can lead to hunger and malnutrition in vulnerable populations.ⁱ Research shows that 'some population groups are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of climate change, whether because of existing socioeconomic inequalities, cultural norms, or intrinsic physiological factors. These groups include women, young children and older people, people with existing health problems or disabilities, and poor and marginalised communities.'ⁱⁱ

In recognition of the health impacts of climate change, HCCA acknowledges that:

- **Climate change can cause serious and irreparable harm to the environment and human health.** Urgent action by governments and corporations in cooperation with the community is essential to mitigate climate change and to adapt where necessary. We endorse Australia adopting a carbon emissions reduction target of 50% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 as proposed by the Public Health Association of Australia and the Australian Climate and Health Alliance.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **People and our health must be central to climate change policy and action.** People need good health, a good environment and a strong community to flourish. A Climate Change policy should ensure that these basic human needs are met. It must reduce the risks to our health that climate change presents, build social cohesion and ensure food and water security for all people.

Concerns about climate change may result in uncertainty, stress and mental ill-health. Assistance for people with jobs in industries which will need to change is an important structural adjustment strategy, specifically including retraining and relocation. Resilience and hope are key human resources and supporting access to mental health services is also important in a time of change.

- **Climate change mitigation and adjustment strategies can deliver positive health outcomes.** The community should be made aware of the negative health impacts of climate change and the potential positive health outcomes from climate change mitigation and adaptation.^{iv}
- **Addressing climate change requires connected solutions.** The inter-relationships between infrastructure design, health and climate policy must be acknowledged and addressed. Solutions must be developed co-operatively and transparently by government, business, academic and other institutions in partnership with communities.

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ⁱ Smith, K.R., et al., Human health: impacts, adaptation, and co-benefits. , in *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.*, C.B. Field, et al., Editors. 2014: Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA. p. pp. 709-754.

ⁱⁱ Watts, N., et al., *The Lancet Commissions: Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health*. *The Lancet*, 2015

ⁱⁱⁱ Armstrong, F. *Joint Submission to Climate Change Authority Special Review*. Public Health Association of Australia and Climate and Health Alliance (march 2015) Available at: <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/363>

^{iv} Australian Medical Association, *Climate Change and Human Health - 2004. Revised 2008. Revised 2015* Accessed: <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/ama-position-statement-climate-change-and-human-health-2004-revised-2015>