



15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

CC  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction  
Minister for the Environment  
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology  
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management  
Minister for Indigenous Australians

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Australian doctors call for urgent and meaningful action on climate change**

Medical leaders across the country are calling on your government to urgently take much greater action to avert a further deterioration of the current climate crisis. With the crucial UN climate change conference (COP26) just weeks away, Australia must significantly lift its commitment to the global effort to bring climate change under control in order to save lives and protect health.

Australia must talk less about aspiration, and focus on firm and binding commitments that are aligned with the science.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) and Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) are coming together with the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM), the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), the College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand (CICM), the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO), and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), to map out a path towards emissions reduction in our sector, and to call on the Australian Government to do more.

We all have a role to play. The AMA and DEA recognise that the health sector needs to reduce its carbon emissions. However, at the national level only the federal government can provide the big-picture policies and framework necessary to address the significant adverse health impacts of climate change.

As doctors, we understand the imminent health threats posed by climate change and have seen them already emerge in Australia. The 2019-2020 bushfire season in Australia saw parts of country afflicted by the poorest air quality in the world, with large numbers of the population enduring weeks of bushfire smoke and the related adverse health impacts. That climate disaster also tragically took more than 30 lives as a direct result of the fires. Since then, we have seen the stark impacts of extreme weather events playing out in the northern hemisphere in 2021. Flooding, fires and heatwaves not only have immediate health risks, but also come with the longer-term physical, economic and mental impacts of displacement, loss of life and loss of livelihoods.

The health organisations listed below, representing Australian doctors, are jointly calling on the Australian Government to:

- Commit to an ambitious national plan to protect health by cutting Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, aligned to science-based targets, this decade. Such a plan would include:
  - policies that acknowledge the health benefits of renewable energy and accelerate the transition; and
  - significantly increasing Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement at UN climate negotiations (COP26), in line with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.
- Develop a national climate change and health strategy to facilitate planning for future climate health impacts; and
- Establish a national Sustainable Healthcare Unit to support environmentally sustainable practice in healthcare and reduce the sector's own significant emissions.

Medical specialist colleges are training the next generation of doctors who will be on the frontline of future climate crises. The AMA and DEA recognise the role medical colleges have to play in training a responsive, resilient and compassionate medical workforce, and the undersigned are joining our call for more substantial government action on climate change. The health, wellbeing and prosperity of our future generations depends on it.

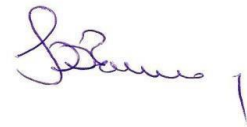
Yours sincerely,



Dr Omar Khorshid  
AMA President



Dr John Van Der Kallen  
DEA Chair



Dr John Bonning  
ACEM President



Dr Vanessa Beavis  
ANZCA President



Dr Sarah Chalmers  
ACRRM President



Dr Mary Pinder  
CICM President



Professor John Wilson AM  
RACP President



Prof Alan Sandford  
RACMA President



Dr Karen Price  
RACGP President



Vijay Roach  
RANZCOG President



Prof Nitin Verma  
RANZCO President



A/Prof Vinay Lakra  
RANZCP President