# **CLIMATE AND HEALTH EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP**

# **Communique of outcomes from meeting held on 2 December 2024**

## Overview

The second meeting of the Australian Government’s Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group (CHEAG) was held on 2 December 2024.

CHEAG is chaired by the Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health, Aged Care and Indigenous Health. It comprises academics, professional representatives, community and industry representatives and experts in climate change and health (see below for membership list). CHEAG supports the implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy by providing expert climate and health advice to the Australian Government.

Following Professor Paul Kelly’s retirement as Chief Medical Officer and head of the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) on 21 October 2024, Ms Mary Wood has been appointed as Head of the interim CDC. CHEAG members welcomed Ms Wood as the group’s new Deputy Chair. Assistant Minister Kearney acknowledged Professor Kelly’s commitment to climate and health policy and thanked him for his significant contribution to developing and implementing the National Health and Climate Strategy.

Members discussed the progress the government has made since the last meeting in August to implement the Strategy, including the significant work to develop the Health National Adaptation Plan. Members also identified priority discussion topics for CHEAG meetings in 2025.

## Update on implementation of the National Health and Climate Strategy

CHEAG received updates on progress in delivery of the Strategy’s 49 actions. Work has commenced on 31 of the 49 actions. Significant progress has been made on 17 Strategy actions, with 12 either completed or substantially completed. Notable progress has been made in the following areas:

* A Joint Statement titled [‘Working together to achieve sustainable high-quality health care in a changing climate’](https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/newsroom/joint-statement-climate-change-and-health) was agreed by all Australian medical colleges, the interim CDC, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, and the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association.
  + The Joint Statement commits signatories to working together to develop a framework for action to embed climate awareness in health professional education and training, and to optimise models of care delivery in line with the three principles of sustainable healthcare (prevention, tackling low value care, and providing high value, low carbon care).
  + To develop this framework, a Working Group has been established including the joint statement signatories and representatives from nursing and allied health profession groups.
* The interim CDC, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, published [‘Detecting and reducing leaks from nitrous oxide in healthcare facilities – A practical guide’](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/detecting-and-reducing-leaks-from-nitrous-oxide-in-healthcare-facilities-a-practical-guide?language=en), a landmark contribution to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from use of nitrous oxide in healthcare settings, over 70% of which is estimated to consist of leaks from piping.
* The Australian Government published the [Health Technology Assessment Policy and Methods Review](https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/hta-review) with recommendations concerning consideration of environmental impacts in health technology assessment.
* The [Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG)](https://catag.org.au/), in partnership with the interim CDC, established an Expert Advisory Group to review the evidence about the inhalational anaesthetic desflurane in light of its significant contribution to climate change. The interim CDC led the development of an evidence review to inform the group’s recommendations.
* The interim CDC published a [‘Systematic Mapping Review of Australian Research on Climate Change and Health Intervention*s’*.](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/systematic-mapping-review-of-australian-research-on-climate-change-and-health-interventions?language=en) This publicationidentified gaps in the Australian climate and health literature and will inform engagement with research funding bodies to identify future research priorities.
* The Australian Government funded a [‘Pacific Climate and Health Resilience Package’](https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-ged-kearney-mp/media/supporting-action-on-climate-change-and-health-in-the-pacific-and-south-east-asia) under its Partnerships for a Healthy Region Initiative. The initiative will support Pacific nations to build health system resilience to the impacts of climate change.

## Health National Adaptation Plan update

CHEAG received an update on the interim CDC’s progress in developing the Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP). The HNAP is being developed in alignment with the economy-wide National Adaptation Plan, which is being developed by the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Since the last CHEAG meeting, the interim CDC has conducted a targeted consultation exercise with stakeholders identified through previous public consultations to inform development of the National Health and Climate Strategy and the National Adaptation Plan. Feedback from the consultation process identified priority areas of action to support the community and health system to adapt and become more resilient to increasing climate-related risks.

## Discussion topics for 2025 CHEAG meetings

A discussion considered how best to structure future meetings to draw on the expertise assembled in CHEAG. It was agreed to hold deep dive discussions at each meeting soliciting member input into priority areas. The meeting identified two priorities for discussion: (1) development and implementation of the Health National Adaptation Plan and (2) options for reducing emissions by reducing waste and resource use in healthcare (including food production). Additional topics suggested include addressing the impacts of climate change on First Nations health, supply chain decarbonisation, reducing care of low clinical value, and addressing the mental health impacts of climate change.

The next meeting is expected to take place in March 2025.

**CHEAG Members**

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| **Name** | **Title and Organisation** |
| The Hon Ged Kearney MP (Chair) | Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care and Indigenous Health |
| Ms Mary Wood (Deputy Chair) | Head, Interim Australian Centre for Disease Control |
| Professor Lynne Madden | Chair, Multi-College Advisory Committee on Climate Change and Health |
| Professor Jennifer Martin | President, Royal Australasian College of Physicians |
| Professor Tarun Weeramanthri | Immediate Past President, Public Health Association Australia |
| Dr Catherine Pendrey | Chair, Climate and Environmental Medicine Special Interest Group, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners |
| Adjunct Associate Professor Rebecca Haddock | Executive Director of Knowledge Exchange, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association |
| Ms Elizabeth de Somer | Chief Executive Officer, Medicines Australia |
| Mr Jason Kara | Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Health Australia |
| Dr Kate Wylie | Chief Executive Officer, Doctors for the Environment Australia |
| Ms Michelle Isles | Chief Executive Officer, Climate and Health Alliance |
| Professor Eugenie Kayak | Enterprise Professor of Sustainable Healthcare, University of Melbourne |
| Professor Kathryn Bowen | Deputy Director, Melbourne Climate Futures |
| Professor Sotiris Vardoulakis | Director, Healthy Environments and Lives Network |
| Associate Professor Angie Bone | Associate Professor of Practice in Planetary Health, Monash Sustainable Development Institute |
| Professor Hilary Bambrick | Director, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University |
| Professor Alexandra Barratt | Professor of Public Health, University of Sydney |
| Associate Professor Steve Morris | Chief Executive Officer, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia |
| Mr Paul Stewart | Chief Executive Officer, The Lowitja Institute |
| Associate Professor Veronica Matthew | Associate Professor, Centre for Rural Health at the University of Sydney |
| Mr Tom Symondson | Chief Executive Officer, Aged & Community Care Providers Association |
| Ms Jade Guitera | Vice-President External, Australian Medical Students’ Association |
| Ms Roslyn Morgan | Environmental Health Officer, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation |
| Professor Tracy Levett-Jones | Distinguished Professor of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Technology Sydney |
| Associate Professor Carolyn Hullick | Chief Medical Officer, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care |
| Professor Nick Watts | Director, Centre for Sustainable Medicine, National University of Singapore |
| Ms Kate Miranda | Chief Executive Officer, Asthma Australia |
| Mr Ian Burgess | Chief Executive Officer, Medical Technology Association of Australia |
| Ms Donna Burns | Chief Executive Officer, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association |
| Dr Bronwyn Gresham | Chief Executive Officer, Psychology for a Safe Climate |
| Dr Danielle McMullen | President, Australian Medical Association |
| Dr Rik Dawson | President Elect, Australian Physiotherapy Association |

## Contact

For further information, please contact the Climate and Health Secretariat at

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