

**Issue:** **Climate Change**  
**Contact:** Belinda Roberts, Acting Assistant Secretary  
s22  
**Division/Agency** Portfolio Strategies Division

## KEY POINTS

- The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is the lead agency for the management of Australia's climate adaptation and science policy. The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources is the lead agency for management of Australia's carbon emission mitigation action.
- The Australian Government has worked to develop a sustainable and responsive health system, capable of responding to climate related pressures on the health of the population and the health system.
- Australia's response to the long term and acute health effects of climate change are predominately managed through the existing health system, with a range of programs which can be expanded or operationalised to respond to emerging pressures.
- The Government released its National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy in 2015 (the Strategy).
- The Strategy recognises that in Australia, national and subnational governments, businesses, households and communities all have different but important roles in managing climate risks, including those that impact on health and wellbeing.
- The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, released in April 2019, provides the 'big picture' for work that government, industries, business, not-for-profits, communities and individuals in Australia must do together so that we can live successfully with these hazards for decades to come.
- Additionally, the Australian Government is working with the states and territories to ensure that Australia's capacity to respond to the health impacts of climate change are appropriate and effective:
  - The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) identified climate change as a health protection priority.
  - The AHPPC has asked its National Health Emergency Standing Committee to develop a National Heat Health Framework.
  - The AHPPC has tasked the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) with conducting a review of the science on the health effects of prolonged smoke exposure.
- The Government is also taking action in direct response to the health impacts of the bushfire crisis – **refer facts and figures section below.**

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### Scaling up of arrangements to respond to the health impacts of the bushfire crisis

- The \$76 million mental health support package for those affected by the current bushfire disaster.
- The Government has provided \$5 million in funding for smoke related research under the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) through an open and competitive round, including:
  - \$3 million for research into the physiological impacts of prolonged bushfire smoke exposure; and
  - \$2 million for research into the mental health impacts of bushfires and smoke on affected communities.
- Provision of over 3.5 million P2 masks (at 10 January), allocated as a priority to those most at risk of significant health effects from smoke.

### Reducing life lost from heatwaves – data project

- In 2019-20, the Department of Health is supporting the Bureau of Meteorology and Department of the Environment and Energy to deliver the analytical project, *Reducing life lost from heatwaves*.
- This project has received \$465,000 in funding through the Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA), and is led by the DIPA-funded Physical Environment Analytical Network. The Department of Health has received \$105,000 of the abovementioned funding to support the project.

### Research into environmental health and climate change

- The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) provides research funding into environmental health, which includes research related to climate change and health. Specific details of project funding can be provided by NHMRC.
- From 2013-19, the NHMRC has issued of approximately \$107.55 million relating to environmental health.

| Research Area        | 2013     | 2014     | 2015     | 2016     | 2017     | 2018     | 2019     | Total     |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Environmental Health | \$13.11m | \$16.69m | \$15.98m | \$16.42m | \$14.33m | \$15.88m | \$15.12m | \$107.55m |

- Of the above Environmental health spending, approximately \$7.16 million has been allocated for research relating to climate change and health over the period 2013-19.

| Research Area  | 2013    | 2014   | 2015    | 2016    | 2017    | 2018   | 2019    | Total   |
|----------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Climate Change | \$2.51m | \$2.2m | \$0.79m | \$0.11m | \$0.23m | \$0.6m | \$0.72m | \$7.16m |

## RELATED QUESTIONS ON NOTICES (QONS)

### PQON 215 – Ms Rebekha Sharkie, Member for Mayo, October 2019

- On 16 October 2019 Ms Sharkie asked Minister Hunt what impact climate change was expected to have upon public health (by disability adjusted life year) in each state and territory in relation to (a) 1.5°C warming; (b) 2°C warming; and (c) business as usual emissions.

- Minister Hunt's response was tabled on 28 November 2019 and advised that information is not available on the specific impact of climate change upon public health by disability adjusted life year.

#### SQ19-000564 – Richard Di Natale – Health Impacts of Climate Change

- In a written QON from the October 2019 Senate Estimates hearing, Senator Di Natale asked about the modelling the Department has undertaken on the likely health costs and impacts of unchecked climate change on health outcomes for Australians and Australia's health system.
- The Department's response noted that it had not undertaken specific modelling on the costs and impacts of climate change. It noted the Department consults across Government and with the states and territories to ensure that Australia's capacity to respond to the health needs of the nation including as the result of climate change are appropriate and effective. The response also noted that the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), has funded a number of projects in relation to, or with a focus on, economic analysis and assessment for the health implications of environmental and climate change.

### RECENT MEDIA

- ***Australian bushfire crisis should be treated as a national public emergency, Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Opposition Leader, and the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Shadow Health Minister 15 & 20 January***
  - Messrs Albanese and Bowen's statements called on the Government to treat the Australian bushfire crisis as a national public health emergency and develop a comprehensive and integrated response to meet the physical and mental health needs of victims.
- ***Climate change should be added to the list of national health priorities, 9th Annual Warren Hogan Memorial Lecture at the University of Sydney 20 November 2019***
  - Mr Bowen's address provided insight into the opposition's position on climate change
  - (For Information) The process to include areas as a national health priority is for all Health Ministers to agree via the COAG Health Council. There is no formal process or criteria for agreeing new priority areas or reviewing current priority areas.
- ***Secretaries Group on Climate Risk wargaming future climate disaster scenarios, ABC 10 September 2019***
  - The ABC reported that the now dormant Secretaries Group on Climate Risk was wargaming future climate disaster scenarios. The Department is a member of the Disaster and Climate Resilience Reference Group, and will continue to engage with other Departments on relevant issues.

### SENSITIVITIES FOR DISCUSSION

- NO

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| Last Cleared By   | Tania Rishniw    |
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