

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH AND THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE IPCC REPORT

BACKGROUND

- The Department of the Environment and Energy is the lead agency for the management of Australia's **climate policy**.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) **is** a trusted **scientific** source **that** will be **considered** in **developing** climate policy.
- The Government has a range of programs to address health issues that are susceptible to environmental pressures, including climate change.
- These programs can be scaled up or down to meet any medium to long term changes in **disease** prevalence **related to** environmental pressures.
- Australia **has** a comprehensive surveillance system monitoring communicable disease **trends**, including **those linked to** climate change.
- **The Government has the capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to the potential impacts of climate change on health.**
- State and territories take the lead on any direct impacts of environmental emergencies.
- The Sydney Morning Herald **reported** on 25 October 2018 that '*almost two dozen leading Australian health experts have blasted the Morrison government's "contemptuous dismissal" of the findings of the latest major climate report and called for a rapid phasing out of coal*' (Attachment A).

FACTS & FIGURES

Australian Burden of Disease Study – Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia in 2011 (2016)

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found that air pollution accounted for **0.6%** of all **disease and injury burden in 2011**.
- Health loss due to air pollution was only linked to fatal burden. Overall, **1.3%** of all **excess fatal burden** in 2011 was attributable to air pollution.
- Air pollution contributed **less than 6%** of the total **excess burden of**

mortality due to coronary heart disease (5.9%) and stroke (4.8%).

Other

- The Australian Government is a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement which commits to limiting the global average temperature to below 2°C.
- Australia is signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 which include climate action and good health.
- For 2016, Australia reported to the WHO's Global Health Observatory an attributable death rate of 17 per 100,000 population from air pollution.
- Australia and New Zealand were the only region to **keep below the WHO** annual mean level of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in 2016.

BACKGROUND

- The IPCC released a Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C in Incheon, Republic of Korea on 8 October 2018.
- The report highlights a number of climate change impacts that could be avoided by limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C.
- The report's **key message** is that 1°C of global warming **has** already **caused** extreme weather, rising sea levels, and consequent human impacts.
- The report claims that limiting global warming to 1.5°C reduces impacts on ecosystems, human health and well-being.
- Less than 1.5°C warming reduces long-lasting or irreversible ecosystem changes making it easier to achieve the United Nations SDGs.
- The IPCC notes the intersection between health protection risk factors and climate change through increasing numbers of natural disasters, rising temperatures, sea-level rises and altered rainfall patterns.
- The report was prepared by 91 authors from 40 countries **who were** invited **by** the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change when it adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015.
- The Lancet **published a letter** by almost two dozen leading Australian health experts **saying** the government had ignored the **IPCC** report.

- The letter called for national and international pressure on the government with a five-step "call to action".
- **This** included "commitment to no new or expanded coal mines, no new coal-fired power stations, phasing out existing coal-fired power stations, and rapidly remove all subsidies to fossil fuel industries".
- The letter's authors include Professor Tony Capon, Nobel Laureates Peter Doherty and Tilman Ruff, and Professor Fiona Stanley.
- **The Climate and Health Alliance has been calling for the development of a national strategy on climate health and wellbeing.**
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has identified climate change as an emerging priority **in** its Strategic Plan 2019-2013.
- The direct impacts **of extreme weather events from** climate change **are** heat related morbidity and mortality, increased respiratory illnesses and rising injuries and fatalities.
- The AHPPC is currently working on the development of a National Health Heatwave Policy which **aims to** develop a consistent national position in the delivery of heat health services and public messaging.
- **The WHO air quality guidelines require regions to maintain annual mean levels of fine particulate matter below 10 micrograms per cubic metre.**

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