




Reducing emissions to protect **mental health and wellbeing**

Fourteen leading Australian mental health, homelessness, disability and representative organisations have come together to urge federal, state and territory governments to take stronger action to address the climate crisis and reduce emissions to protect the mental health and wellbeing of the Australian community.

Our organisations are deeply concerned about the growing negative mental health and wellbeing impacts of climate change on Australians and are today calling on all governments, led by the Australian Government, to:

- Set ambitious new emission reduction targets in line with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels
- Take urgent action to meet these new targets, including phasing out fossil fuels and redirecting fossil fuel subsidies into accelerating the transition to clean, renewable and zero emission energy sources
- Plan and fund by 2021 a fair transition that supports communities with abundant job opportunities in a zero-carbon economy
- Develop in 2020 a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing that considers the mental health and social housing needs of Australians – building on the framework developed by health groups from across Australia by the Climate and Health Alliance
- Convene a roundtable on climate change and mental health, disability, and homelessness
- Invest in strategies to build capacity and resilience for all communities and regions likely to be impacted by workforce transition and climate change
- Commit to supporting mental health, housing, aged care, disability and social services to meet the growing challenges resulting from climate change
- Take international leadership on this issue and lobby for global agreement to stronger emissions reductions at COP 26 in 2020 to limit warming to 1.5 °C.

Our organisations believe the first responsibility of the Australian Government is to keep Australian citizens safe, and prioritise their health and wellbeing. The Paris Agreement obliges the Australian Government to consider its citizens' right to health in its national climate change response.



We see first-hand that Australian communities are already experiencing more frequent and more severe impacts of climate change across the nation. This is adversely affecting the mental and physical health of the community, adding to the pressures on our already under-resourced mental health services and impacting the disability sector and wider social support systems and social enterprises.

The bushfire emergency led to a crisis in mental health, homelessness and trauma. In addition the physical health impacts, including the air pollution crisis on people with chronic health conditions or those experiencing homelessness have greatly reduced resilience among the community and these effects are now compounded by COVID-19.

While all Australians are now feeling the impacts of climate change, these adverse effects will disproportionately impact particular groups of Australians including people living with mental and other chronic health issues, older people, people with disabilities, people who are homeless and marginalised, people on lower incomes, people living in regional Australia including farming communities impacted by extended droughts, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly living in rural and remote locations.

Emergency events such as floods, bushfires and cyclones are traumatic. As these increase in frequency and severity, this will have wide ranging and long-term impacts on the mental health of all Australians and our communities. Without stronger local emissions reductions and international leadership for stronger global emission reductions, the rates of trauma in the community are likely to increase beyond the capacity of our health and social welfare systems and services to cope.

Our communities and services need to be resourced and involved in planning for adaptation to mitigate the effects of climate change. As organisations working with communities across Australia, we anticipate **substantial effort and investment will be required to adapt and expand our services to meet the challenge** of adaptation to warming at 1.5 °C. Future scenarios at 2 °C of warming or beyond must be avoided and only united global emissions reductions will achieve this.

Current Australian and international emissions reductions commitments are inadequate to limit global warming to a safe level. **As leaders in mental health, suicide prevention, homelessness, disability and ageing we call on the Australian Government to urgently enhance Australia's emissions reduction efforts, take international leadership on emissions reduction and to develop and implement this plan as a national priority.**

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