# Climate Change and Health

Extreme weather events associated with climate change can significantly impact health.

Vulnerable populations may experience greater climate change related health impacts. These populations include children, the elderly, socio-economically disadvantaged people, people living with chronic disease, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people living in geographically vulnerable locations (coastal regions, rural and remote areas, etc.).

Cross sectoral, coordinated healthcare is necessary to respond to community need, particularly during extreme weather events.

In Australia, climate related health issues have been attributed to increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events including heatwaves, severe storms, floods, droughts, bushfires and deteriorating air quality. Weather changes are leading to shifts in temperature, water distribution, food growing patterns and vector borne diseases.

These events have substantial and ongoing impacts to physical and mental health and disease.

The Commonwealth Government does not have a policy addressing climate change related health impacts.

Australia's health sector is directly responsible for 7% of carbon emissions in Australia, providing significant scope for the sector to reduce its carbon footprint.

## AHHA POSITION:

- Climate change related events causes significant health issues in Australia.

- Mitigating climate change will reduce health risks, improve health and wellbeing and reduce healthcare costs.

- Governments at all levels should implement policies and undertake steps to take action on climate change.

- The Commonwealth Government must provide leadership with a national response to address climate change and health. This will require a national policy framework such as the Climate and Health Alliance's Framework for a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being to coordinate action across all levels of government.

- The health sector can play a major role in climate change action—by reducing the sector's carbon footprint and providing leadership to act on climate change.

- Policy action on climate change and health must provide targeted responses for vulnerable populations.

- Health systems and healthcare providers must appropriately plan and prepare for extreme weather events and emerging health challenges resulting from climate change.

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