



The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

DOCTORS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

ACT NOW TO REDUCE THE DAMAGING HEALTH IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Peak medical organisations from around the world have come together to call on States at the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) to commit to meaningful and urgent action to combat the adverse health impacts of climate change.

The recently released Second Report of the Lancet Commission on Climate Change and Health: policy responses to protect public health released in June 2015 and the wealth of available evidence demonstrates unequivocally that climate change is a global health issue.

The devastating impacts of climate change on human health across the globe can no longer be ignored. Extreme weather events, disruptions to food and water supply, loss of livelihoods, threats to human security and alterations in climate-sensitive disease distribution and frequency will all be exacerbated by unchecked climate change.¹ These have serious consequences for physical and mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that countries that contribute the least to climate change are most likely to be severely affected. Many have limited resources to allow them to adapt to climate change and their health services already struggle to cope with the burden of climate-sensitive disease.²

COP21 offers the opportunity to limit the degree of warming to levels where adaptation is still possible. States must commit to meaningful measures to circumvent the adverse health effects of climate change that threaten us all. It is imperative that States commit to investing in climate change mitigation measures and in assisting lower income countries to do so.

Alongside these commitments from States at COP21, as a global health and medical community, we will also commit to promoting measures which will have positive co-benefits for our patients. There are significant immediate health benefits that flow from taking action on climate change at the individual and local level that will result in reduced rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, improved life expectancy and reduced pressure on health systems.³

1 The 2015 Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change: Policy responses to protect public health

2 Kjellstrom, T & McMichael, A.J (2013) Climate change threats to population health and wellbeing: the imperative of protective solutions that will last. Global Health Action 2013

3 Climate change challenges to health. Australian Academy of Science (2015)

