



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Media Release

Climate Change - health impacts require urgent action

23 June 2015

The launch of the second report of the Global Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change reveals an opportunity to improve the health of individuals, while tackling the challenge of climate change.

RACP President, Laureate Professor Nicholas Talley said that the report demonstrates that Climate Change is a pressing health issue, and that taking action at the individual, local and international levels to abate its effects will also have benefits for individual health.

The report also reveals that climate change will disproportionately impact older people and people with pre-existing health issues or disabilities, and disadvantaged communities in Australia.

“It highlights the urgency for action by health professionals around the country, it is our duty to care for the health of our community,” Professor Talley said.

“As health professionals, we have a responsibility at a local, national, and global level to address climate change.

“The report warns that over the next 85 years we are on track for a four degree increase in global temperatures above pre-industrial records unless action is taken. A two degree increase on today’s global average increases the risk of catastrophic climate change impacts.

“The direct health impacts of climate change include significant increases in heat-related illnesses, infectious diseases, cardiovascular diseases, injuries, and respiratory diseases. These are caused by extreme weather patterns brought on by climate change such as increased frequency of storms, drought, flood and heatwave.

“The indirect health impacts of climate change include water quality, air pollution, land use change and ecological change. The combination of direct and indirect mechanisms can interact with social dynamics such as age, gender, health status, socioeconomic status and can lead to poor health outcomes.”

Last month the College was one of the first health organisations around the globe to commit to divesting itself of all investments directly and materially involved with fossil fuels.

The Lancet Commission Report is prepared by leading climate scientists, economists, energy experts and health professionals from around the world.

Ends

Media contact: Ryan Lipman +61 2 9256 9650, +61 4088 639 697 or ryan.lipman@racp.edu.au

Follow the RACP on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheRACP>

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,950 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,530 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 34 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au