



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Media Release

Paris climate deal – action now needed - say physicians

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The Royal Australasian College of Physicians New Zealand Committee (RACPNZ) has hailed the Paris climate deal as “a positive step forward” and called on the Government and Civil Society to make it a reality.

“This is the first time, since the UN formed, that member states have made such a unified, bold commitment to action,” says Professor Chris Bullen, Chair of the New Zealand Policy & Advocacy Committee.

“It sends a strong message to the public that governments all over the world now take climate change seriously,” he says.

“Climate change already impacts communities around the world by way of diseases, heat and extreme weather. It is rendering people homeless, leading to food shortages and increased levels of malnutrition,” says Dr George Laking, Chair of the Climate Change & Health Working Party.

“We know that unchecked climate change will increase the frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and coastal storms leading to devastating consequences for all our Pacific neighbours,” he says.

“We call on the New Zealand government to work with urgency to make the Paris agreement a number one priority.

“This is an opportunity for the medical community to work together, keeping the pressure on decision makers, demanding they take real action to protect the health of all citizens. It is an opportunity for us to lead by example,” Dr Laking says.

The College has already been the driving force behind Doctors for Climate Action - a global movement to raise awareness of the health impacts of climate change.

The movement is now backed by 68 international health and medical organisations and the College coordinated and presented a global consensus statement at the Climate and Health Summit 2015 held in Paris last week.

Ends

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Key Facts:

- Increases in global temperature and changes to rainfall patterns will disrupt agricultural production, leading to food shortages and increased levels of malnutrition.
- Extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts and floods are likely to increase with climate change causing illness, injury, and loss of life. These events will lead to reduced air quality, changes to the spread of infectious diseases and adverse mental health impacts.
- The impact of climate change on global temperatures and rainfall affects the formation and dispersion of air pollutants. This will exacerbate rates of cardiovascular and respiratory disease resulting from air pollution.

Visit: www.doctorsforclimateaction.org

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric 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. The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.