

Media Release

It's time to join the dots on health and climate: RACP

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As global leaders meet in Marrakech, Morocco for the UN conference (COP22) on climate change, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is calling on Australian governments to commit to a national climate and health strategy.

Today the RACP released [three new Climate Change and Health Position Statements](#), promoting policies to deliver the health benefits of climate action.

The RACP position statements join the dots between health and climate change, shed light on how the healthcare sector can reduce climate risk, and showcase the health benefits of taking action on climate change.

The RACP President Dr Catherine Yelland said the College has taken a stand on climate change because of the serious threats to health and wellbeing, doctors' duty towards the health of patients and the community and the potentially significant role healthcare can play in mitigation.

"Environmental sustainability needs to become a core part of health policy and planning," said Dr Yelland. "Healthcare has a significant role to play in mitigation and Australia should follow the lead of the UK by benchmarking healthcare's carbon footprint, assessing the sector's capacity to manage risk, and promoting innovation.

"A strong national strategy linking climate and health would drive collaboration between and across governments, and help to strengthen action."

Dr Yelland said climate change is fast becoming one of the most pressing global health issues, but also represents a significant opportunity to promote public health.

"The evidence on health and climate change is clear, and climate action will deliver substantial public health benefits."

The UN warns that, despite recent progress, current policy commitments still put the world on a path to hit 3°C of warming. Left unchecked, climate change risks undoing public health gains and worsening poverty.

The World Health Organization estimates that even relatively limited warming could result in an extra 250,000 deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, just from diarrhoea, malaria, malnutrition, and heat stress.

Dr Yelland said that the last few years had seen a tremendous growth in the number of medical voices joining the global call to action. They include the American College of Physicians, the British and American Medical Associations, the World Health Organization, The Lancet, and the Royal College of Physicians, to name a few.

“Around the world, doctors are raising their voices on this issue. The RACP is one of many medical colleges and scores of other healthcare organisations calling for urgent action on climate change.”

In 2015, in the lead up to the COP21 in Paris, the RACP coordinated the international campaign *Doctors for Climate Action*, and led 69 health and medical organisations in a Global Consensus Statement on climate change and health.

That same year, the RACP decided to divest its interests in fossil fuel industries, worth about \$2.3 million, due to the health impacts of climate change.

Meanwhile, in Marrakech and London this week, doctors are launching a new international research collaboration – *The Lancet Countdown* – to monitor progress to 2030 on climate policies that promote health. The initiative builds on the work of the Climate Health Commission organised in 2015 by the medical journal *The Lancet*.

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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.