



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A substantial and growing body of scientific evidence is highlighting that **the public health risks posed by climate change represent a health emergency.**

In ratifying the Paris Agreement in November of 2016, the Australian Government formally agreed to **consider the 'right to health' of citizens** in the context of the nation's climate change response, and to **recognise the co-benefits for health in developing mitigation strategies**. However, human health has not yet been afforded sufficient priority in Australia's mitigation and adaptation policies and strategies.

A nation-wide consultation with healthcare stakeholders in 2016 revealed **serious concerns at the lack of national leadership** to address the serious and increasing public health risks posed by climate change. There is a clear expectation that the **Commonwealth Government provide leadership** for a national response to address climate change and health, and a firm conviction that a **national public policy framework is required** to coordinate action across government portfolios and at all levels of government.

While important actions are being taken at the state/territory and local level, a **coordinated national effort is required to ensure that Australia is well prepared** to protect the health and well-being of communities from the impacts of climate change.

This Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia provides a roadmap to **support the Commonwealth Government in taking a leadership role in protecting the health and well-being of Australian communities** from climate change, and in **fulfilling its international obligations under the Paris Agreement**.

It also provides a **policy framework against which Australia can demonstrate its progress against the Lancet Countdown Indicators**. Starting in 2017, this will be an annual global evaluation of nations' responses to climate change, and the health benefits that emerge from the low carbon transition.

The Framework does not only imply actions and strategies for the health portfolio and sector; in recognition of the systemic and complex nature of climate change, and the fact that **the determinants of health and well-being lie largely outside the health sector**, it prescribes policy directions **for a range of portfolios**, including energy, climate, environment, transport, and infrastructure. It includes actions for federal, state, and local government, for research institutions, and for the health sector itself.



# A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CLIMATE, HEALTH AND WELL- BEING FOR AUSTRALIA

## VISION

“A fair and environmentally sustainable national policy framework that recognises, manages and addresses the health risks of climate change and promotes health through climate change action.”





## APPLICATION

This framework is targeted at the federal level as it requires national leadership and coordination. However, it is intended that the National Strategy will facilitate both horizontal and vertical intergovernmental collaboration across multiple sectors including the health sector, primarily through the establishment of a Ministerial Health and

Climate Change Forum with overall responsibility for development and implementation of the Strategy.<sup>IX</sup> Thus, it should be considered applicable to national, state/territory, and local government departments and agencies, as well as across multiple portfolio areas, including health, transport, energy, environment, agriculture, planning and infrastructure.

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT

The consultation process which informed the development of this Framework identified key responsibilities of the Federal Government in order to provide leadership across climate change and health and in facilitation of a whole of government approach to protect the health and well-being of the community from climate-related impacts. The intention of the Framework is to provide a roadmap or suite of options that could be progressed into a formalised strategy and be implemented by the Federal Government into the future. This will require a clear plan of action detailing the policies, actions, targets and responsibilities required at multiple levels and sectors of government to address the health impacts of climate change. It will also require the establishment of appropriate governance and funding arrangements to facilitate the necessary partnerships for shared action and enhanced capacity, coordination and leadership on climate change and health initiatives.

A crucial role of the Federal Government in maximising health outcomes for communities will be in building Australia's health and climate research capacity and doing so in a manner consistent with international policy directions. The Federal Government has a responsibility to ensure policy development is informed by a deep understanding of the specific health

threats climate change poses for Australian people and communities. The establishment of a world class climate and health research capacity is vital to identify priority needs, key vulnerabilities and the most effective mitigation and health adaptation measures.

The Federal Government and federal and state health departments also have a responsibility to support the creation of a low carbon and climate resilient health sector. This involves developing policies to enhance the climate resilience of health infrastructure as well as ensuring preparedness among the workforce to respond to climate change impacts. Engagement of health stakeholders in policy development is vital, and education and capacity building across all levels of the health sector is necessary to support this transition.

At the community level, the development of policies which resource and support communities to anticipate and adapt to climate risks is essential to protecting health and well-being. Federal, state and local governments have a responsibility to ongoing engagement supported by education efforts to enhance the community's understanding of specific vulnerabilities and opportunities for action to avoid health risks and improve health outcomes.

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IX Refer to the section on Governance for a detailed explanation of the structure, roles and responsibilities of the proposed Ministerial Health and Climate Change Forum



## THE SEVEN AREAS OF POLICY ACTION

The Framework is structured around seven key Areas of Policy Action. These have been identified through research and consultation with health professionals, health leaders, decision makers and experts in climate change and health.



Under each of these Areas of Policy Action, the desired outcome is identified, along with an overarching policy direction and specific policy recommendations for achieving this outcome. Policy recommendations are focused on areas which present opportunities for capturing health co-benefits of climate action and which will improve the resilience and health outcomes for Australian communities.

The Framework recognises that due to differences in national, state and local government responsibilities, some policy recommendations would be implemented at a federal level whereas others would be implemented at a state or local government level. In addition, the Framework recognises that some of the policy recommendations may require amendments to national, state or local government legislation, whereas others could be implemented without the need for regulatory change. Should these policy recommendations be progressed as part of a national strategy by the Federal Government, it is expected that the strategy would provide details of specific responsibilities across the various levels of government.