

COVID-19: Advocating for Action on Climate and Health | Climate and Health Alliance



Background

The current COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the potential for public health emergencies to cause dramatic disruption. It follows the unprecedented bushfires and dangerous smoke pollution that made the links between climate change and people's health starkly obvious. Both of these events have revealed the increasing vulnerability of the Australian community and our health system -- unless we take action.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the critical role of the health and medical professionals in preparing us for and responding to these crises. Right now we have an opportunity to highlight the intensifying climate crisis, which is increasingly taking lives and harming people's health.

Through heatwaves, bushfires and other extreme weather events, climate change is already harming Australians' health. Environmental degradation and climate change increase the risk and spread of infectious diseases, like coronaviruses, making future pandemics more likely.

Social research tells us, when disruption occurs, people become more open to what may have previously seemed to be radical ideas. However this window of opportunity is quite short before people start wanting things to return to 'normal', even if 'normal' wasn't optimum before.

We must seize this window to use the power and influence of health voices to set an ambitious policy agenda that will win public and political support for urgent climate action.

Project summary

This project will seize the opportunity COVID-19 provides to highlight the underlying health emergency of climate change and leverage the deepened public trust in health professionals to ensure the post-COVID economic recovery is health-led and delivers climate action.

We will use health professionals to communicate the connections between the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental degradation and climate change; focus attention on the underlying climate crisis and its associated health risks; and unite health stakeholders around a concrete, ambitious policy agenda to deliver health protection and climate action post-COVID-19 and beyond.

Project goals

- Bring together 40 health leaders to agree on an ambitious post-COVID policy and advocacy agenda, including through a *Health Leaders Roundtable*
- Develop a Discussion Paper to shape the policy agenda ahead of the Roundtable
- Launch an ambitious policy agenda for a Health-Led Economic Recovery that builds on our [*Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia*](#)
- Use the trusted voices of health professionals to communicate the need for urgent climate action to protect health through mainstream and social media
- Mobilise health stakeholders to advocate to governments for the shared policy agenda
- Achieve commitments from federal and at least two state/territory governments to adopt at least two elements of this policy agenda

Key stakeholders and participants

Through this project we will engage health and medical organisations and institutions and their leaders, including the Australian Medical Association, Public Health Association of Australia, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Australian Council of Social Services, Medical Journal of Australia, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, and other leading Australian medical colleges.

We will also engage with allies from State and Territory Health Departments, academic and research institutions (including Australian National University College of Health and Medicine and the Monash Sustainable Development Institute), as well as climate movement leaders with health-focussed campaigns, those working on transformational resilience, and futures thinkers.

Budget*

INCOME		
Confirmed funding	For Project Lead salary (0.2 FTE)	\$15,000
ACF Impact Fund (unconfirmed)	Through <i>Safeguarding the Environment</i> stream	\$50,000
Report Partner (unconfirmed)	Currently in conversation with a major environmental NGO about partnering on a COVID-19, climate, environment and health report	\$30,000
TOTAL		\$95,000
EXPENDITURE		
Project Lead	0.4 FTE for 8 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee project and project team • Health sector network coordination 	\$30,000
Policy Manager	0.4 FTE for 8 months to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Discussion Paper production in lead up to Roundtable • Write report on outcomes and key policy directions post Roundtable 	\$26,000
Communications Manager	0.2 FTE for 8 months to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead proactive and reactive media • Work with Designer on digital assets 	\$13,000
Communications and Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web, design, digital assets • Production of Discussion Paper, policy agenda and report 	\$16,000
Roundtable logistics and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of online platform to host Roundtable (currently exploring best option) • Web, tech and event support for Roundtable 	\$2,500
CAHA Admin Fee	Contributes to organisational overheads & administration	\$7,500
TOTAL		\$95,000

**This is our ideal budget scenario. If we are unable to raise the full amount, we will run a modified version of this project.*

Please note: we have access to DGR1 status through a partnership with the Australian Council of Social Services.

High-level Timeline

MONTH	ACTIVITIES
May - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conversations with leading health sector figures and organisations ● Establish Steering Committee and Expert Reference Group ● Letter to Health Minister / Prime Minister outlining health sector's topline priorities ● Produce and disseminate Discussion Paper in lead up to Roundtable
July - Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host Health Leaders Roundtable ● Seek media in lead up to and after the Roundtable ● Produce outcomes report (including policy agenda)
Sept - Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launch outcomes report ● Seek media around report launch, covering policy agenda ● Coordinate health sector advocacy with target Ministers and representatives ● Pursue proactive and reactive media opportunities to build public support for policy agenda
Nov - Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate health stakeholders participation in National Climate Action Summit (planned for Nov) ● Keep ongoing pressure on government ● Take opportunities to ensure successful implementation of recommendations ● Evaluate and finalise project

Who we are

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) is Australia's national peak body on climate and health. CAHA is a coalition of 40 health and medical groups, academic and research institutions, health care service providers and unions.

CAHA's mission is to build a powerful health sector movement for climate action. The health sector is Australia's largest employer, and health professionals are the most trusted members of our community. By working together, the health sector can lead action on climate to protect health.

We have a proven record of building powerful coalitions for policy change. Through the [Our Climate Our Health](#) campaign, we have built a coalition of 50 health groups advocating for a *National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia*, securing commitments from the ALP, Greens, and key Independents, and shifting state policy in QLD, Victoria, WA and Tasmania.

With the right support, we are confident we can create a narrative that, without action on the underlying climate crisis, we will see more health emergencies and accompanying social and economic disruption. Therefore urgent climate action is necessary to protect health and the economy.

We have already begun this work, with [a piece in The Conversation](#) which has been read more than 49,000 times, as well as [an interview on ABC TV Weekend Breakfast](#).

Further reading

- [Coronavirus is a wake-up call: our war with the environment is leading to pandemics](#), The Conversation, co-written by Climate and Health Alliance Executive Director Fiona Armstrong
- [Fiona Armstrong on ABC TV Weekend Breakfast](#) discussing COVID-19, environmental degradation and climate change
- Our [Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia](#) policy agenda
- [Shadow Minister for Health, Chris Bowen, calling for action on climate and health](#)
- [Zali Steggall promises action to stem health impact of climate change](#), The Guardian

Contact

Fiona Armstrong
Executive Director, Climate and Health Alliance
0438 900 005 | fiona.armstrong@caha.org.au



Croakey team @CroakeyNews · 5h
An important moment for #publichealth - tripartite support for #ClimateHealthStrategy #Auspol



Ken Wyatt MP @KenWyattMP · 18h
Releasing @healthy_climate for a healthy Australia with @RichardDINatale and @CatherineKingMP

