

AUSTRALIAN LESBIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

POSITION STATEMENT ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Australia is fortunate to have a diverse natural environment and a vibrant healthy community with good access to healthcare. However, air pollution, drought, extreme weather and bushfires threaten our health and livelihood¹.

The Australian Medical Association has called for urgent international cooperation to mitigate Climate Change to avoid serious or irreversible harm to the environment and human health. (AMA Position Statement 2015)

Scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change urge that we need to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. This would require a fall of 45% in global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide from 2010 by 2030, reaching “net zero” by 2050. (IPCC: Special Report 2018)

As Australia is currently increasing its carbon emissions rather than reducing them, ALMA, as an Australian Medical Association, can contribute to advocating for urgent action on this issue by Government, and the Public and Private sector.

ALMA acknowledges the work of the Doctors for the Environment in this issue and statement.

Climate Change

Climate change is a health emergency. Australia needs to address climate change as an issue threatening the health and wellbeing of present and future generations. We need a “whole of government and civil society” approach to ensure deep greenhouse emission cuts. A safe climate protects health.²

ALMA advocates for:

The inclusion of respected climate science in all government policies and decisions with refunding of the CSIRO’s Climate Science Division as an advisory group to the Government, and for the IPCC’s call for urgent action to be applied to all Government decisions.

A program for increasing public awareness through public education programs and in educational institutions to assist in mitigation of Climate Change and adaptation.

Prompt action to reduce national emissions with a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050²

Rapid Transition from fossil fuels

Energy derived from fossil fuels contributes to toxic air pollution which damages health, causing increased mortality and rates of lung and heart disease, stroke and cancer³. Renewable energy sources are cheaper and are safe for human health⁴.

ALMA advocates for:

Strong Renewable Energy Targets – at least 50% by 2030

Strong support to be given to workers displaced from carbon intensive industries and new employment opportunities generated in the renewable energy industry.

We require a rapid transition from fossil-fuel (coal and gas mining and combustion) to a mix of renewable energy sources; ALMA does not support any new coal or gas⁵ mining.

ALMA advocates for:

No new coal or gas for Australia

Reduce Pollution

Air pollution is an invisible killer which contributes to over 3000 deaths per year and as well as extensive illness.⁷ We need to ensure that air pollution from coal fired power and vehicles is alleviated by improved air quality standards in keeping with international scientific opinion.

ALMA advocates for:

Best practice technology for current coal-fired power plants to prevent pollution⁷

Strong national controls on air pollution standards via NEPM

Natural environment

Our health is absolutely dependent on our natural environment. We require a New Generation of Environmental Laws⁸ which will protect the environment and biodiversity, including an independent Sustainability Commission and a national EPA. In the meantime, legislative powers must be used to prevent environmental degradation and protect against climate change.

ALMA advocates for:

New legislation for a New Generation of Environmental Laws

We need to take prompt action to stop land clearing and logging of old growth forests⁹. Reform of the agricultural sector is required to ensure sustainability of this important Australian industry.

ALMA advocates for:

A Moratorium on land clearing and logging of old growth forests

Sustainable Health Sector

Hospitals and healthcare use copious resources and energy and produce significant waste and greenhouse gases. Australia needs a national Healthcare Sustainability Unit to significantly reduce greenhouse emissions, pollution and waste from the health sector.¹⁰

ALMA advocates for:

Creation of a national Healthcare Sustainability Unit (HSU) to help reduce emissions, pollution and waste from the health sector.

Reference list:

1. Severe storms, floods and your health – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/severe-storms-floods-and-your-health-fact-sheet/>
Bushfires and Health in a Changing Environment - DEA Fact sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/bushfires-and-health-in-a-changing-environment-fact-sheet/>

Heatwave Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/heatwave-fact-sheet/>

2. Climate Change and Health in Australia – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/climate-change-and-health-in-australia-fact-sheets/>
Australian Health Professionals' Statement on Climate Change and Health. *The Lancet*. October 2018
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)32610-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)32610-2/fulltext)

No Time for Games Summary Report Update 2018 – Children's Health and Climate Change
<https://www.dea.org.au/no-time-for-games-summary-report-update-2018/>
Health benefits far outweigh the costs of meeting climate change goals. World Health Organisation, December 2018 <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/05-12-2018-health-benefits-far-outweigh-the-costs-of-meeting-climate-change-goals>

Climate change and health fact sheet. World Health Organisation, February 2018 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

3. Special Climate Report: 1.5oC is possible but requires unprecedented and urgent action. United Nations, October 2018 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/10/special-climate-report-1-5oc-is-possible-but-requires-unprecedented-and-urgent-action/>

4. The Health Toll of Coal – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/the-health-toll-of-coal-fact-sheet/>
The Health Burden of fine particle pollution from electricity generation in NSW. Dr Ben Ewald, November 2018
<https://www.envirojustice.org.au/healthstudynsw/>

5. Renewable Energy – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/renewable-energy-healthy-planet-healthy-people-dea/> Renewables Ready - Climate Council report 2017
<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/2017-states-report/>

6. Unconventional gas and health – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/unconventional-gas-and-health-fact-sheet-healthy-planet-healthy-people-dea/>

7. DEA Policy on Air Pollution 2017 <https://www.dea.org.au/air-pollution-policy-healthy-planet-healthy-people-dea/>
The Dirty Truth: Australia's most polluted postcodes. Australian Conservation Foundation. November 2018
https://www.acf.org.au/stronger_air_pollution_standards_needed_to_protect_poorer_australians
Controlling toxic air pollution from power stations. Environmental Justice Australia.
<https://www.envirojustice.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/EJA-fact-sheet-Emission-controls-for-NOx-and-SO2.pdf> Clearing the air: why Australia urgently needs effective national air pollution laws. Environmental Justice Australia
https://www.envirojustice.org.au/sites/default/files/files/Submissions%20and%20reports/Envirojustice_air_pollution_re_port_final.pdf

8. New Generation of Nature Laws <http://www.placesyoulove.org/australiawelove/naturelaws/>
Strong National Environmental Laws to protect the places, people and wildlife we love, June 2018
www.placesyoulove.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PYL-policy-briefer-June2018.pdf
The Murray-Darling needs life support with expert team management <https://www.dea.org.au/the-murray-darling-needs-life-support-with-expert-team-management/>

9. How Land Clearing Harms our Health – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/how-land-clearing-harms-our-health-fact-sheet/>
Why we need Forests and Native Vegetation – DEA Fact Sheet <https://www.dea.org.au/why-we-need-forests-and-native-vegetation-for-our-health-fact-sheet/>

10. An Australian Healthcare Sustainability Unit (HSU) – DEA Proposal <https://www.dea.org.au/sustainable-hospitals-draft-page-for-document-uploads/>

