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Ten medical colleges, representing more than 100,000 doctors write to political leaders calling for a climate ready and climate friendly healthcare system

To Australia's federal political leaders,

Climate change is a major risk to our healthcare system.

We are a broad group of doctors and physicians. We're seeing the impacts of climate change on health first-hand, supporting our communities in the aftermath of horrific bushfires and devastating floods. We're also seeing the impacts of extreme heat, particularly on older people. Paediatricians and obstetricians are concerned about how climate change will affect the lives of their young patients as they grow. GPs and psychiatrists are witnessing the mental health impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on people of all ages. And specialist physicians across the country are bracing for an onslaught of illness caused by the impacts of climate change. The recent floods in NSW and Queensland, unprecedented in magnitude in living memory, demonstrate why **we must act now to reduce the devastating impacts of severe weather events.**

We are calling on federal political leaders to commit to action to build the resilience of our healthcare system to the impacts of climate change. At the same time, we want to play our part in the solutions. We're advocating for support to ensure the healthcare system can reduce its own climate footprint.

We need a healthcare system that is both **climate ready** and **climate friendly**.

In the lead up to the Australian Federal Election, we are calling on all parties and candidates to commit to ensuring our healthcare system is:

Climate ready

1. Create and fund a National Climate Change and Health Strategy that will enable our healthcare system to build climate resilience, including:
 - a. development of climate risk and vulnerability assessments and locally led disaster planning for the healthcare system; acknowledging that rural and remote communities are at particular risk;
 - b. adaptation and resilience plans which acknowledge, support, and are guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership;
 - c. equipping health and medical professionals with information, tools and resources to support them to anticipate, prepare for and respond to climate risks;
 - d. establishment of a surge health and medical workforce for deployment in response to extreme weather events;
 - e. being informed by the experience of COVID-19 and the limitations and vulnerabilities of the health system to significant shocks.
2. Create and fund a National Climate Change and Health Sustainability Unit to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.
3. Invest in a national Climate Change and Health Resilience Research Fund to identify resilience strategies suited to our health system.

Climate friendly

1. Establish a Climate Friendly Health System Innovation Fund to provide grants to local health services for emissions reduction and sustainability initiatives.
2. Include a plan for equitably decarbonising healthcare, to achieve net zero emissions in healthcare by 2040 in a funded National Climate Change and Health Strategy.

In developing climate change adaptation and resilience plans, we must learn from First Peoples who have built up thousands of years of accumulated knowledge on how to live sustainably in the unique Australian landscape. We must draw on that now to inform and guide our future plans. Indigenous cultural knowledge and leadership will strengthen our response to climate change and avoid harmful unintended consequences on communities that face existing health inequities.

In addition, we join many others, including the business community, farmers and community groups, in calling for an urgent transition to net-zero emissions across all economic sectors to address the underlying causes of climate change, with support to affected communities.

Signatories:

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