

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**4 April 2022**



## **It's time to recognise and act on the climate emergency**

A new position statement from the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF) is calling on all Australian governments for strong and urgent action on climate change. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of knowing and doing are vital to caring for Country. These knowledges need to be priorities and privileged in our climate actions to meet our new 2050 target.

Governments need to address climate change and its impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and all Australians. This is a major concern for members of the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF), with the impacts of climate change being further demonstrated by the natural disasters that have impacted many communities across Australia in recent years and continue today.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-31 acknowledges climate change. The Plan includes a focus on healthy environments, sustainability, and preparedness, however the need for action goes beyond the scope of the Health Plan. The impacts of climate change and global heating must always be at the forefront of planning and decision making.

The Chair of the NHLF, Monica Barolits-McCabe, said strong urgent action is needed by all Australian governments to raise our 2030 ambitions and meet our local and global responsibilities in keeping the Earth's global average temperature below 1.5 degrees C, "a level that will have very significant impacts."

"Climate change presents an opportunity for redress and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead climate action planning based on their intimate traditional and historical knowledges of Country." Monica says.

Lowitja Institute CEO, Adjunct Professor, Janine Mohamed said "Research demonstrates that culturally safe, community-driven and strengths-based approaches work to enhance our health and wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a holistic understanding of the connection to the environment and health and wellbeing, which is bound by culture."

"Our unique cultural knowledges and understanding creates a strengths-based policy to caring for Country. Culture is an abiding strength for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is the central foundation of resilience", Dr Mohamed said.

The NHLF Deputy Chair Fiona Cornforth said the position statement "highlights the importance of traditional knowledges and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives in climate change adaptation and mitigation in strengthening wellbeing and benefitting the global community."

"It is time for all Governments to stop the denial and inaction on climate change and listen and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities on the best ways to care for Country – our diverse environment and water ways" said Ms Barolits-McCabe.

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