

Thursday, December 15, 2022

Minister for Health, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Rachel Stephen-Smiths, Australia's Capital Territory

Minister Stephen-Smiths is on leave.

The following statement is attributable to an ACT Government spokesperson:

The ACT Government's *Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025* sets out vision and actions to tackle climate change. The Strategy aims to build resilience to climate change impacts and lay the foundations for the Government's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2045 and net-zero in the health sector by 2040. The Government recognises the impact that climate change is having and will have on health and is prioritising the development of a dedicated ACT Climate Health Plan, which will look to continue the ACT's nation leading approach to responding to and mitigating the impacts on our population.

While this plan is still being developed, the Government has been taking whole-of-government action to respond to the impacts of climate change. One example has been the ACT Government's *Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2021-2025*, which aims at preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from significant bushfire smoke events. It maps a wide range of policy areas including emergency management; regulation of environmental pollution; monitoring of air quality; public health advice, warnings and directions; work health and safety; building standards and support for businesses and our community.

The first Action Plan includes actions for ACT Directorates in the first two years of the strategy cover 2021-2023 and whole of government will report on the progress of items at the end of this plan.

Additional information was provided on relevant discussions in the Assembly

Minister Stephen-Smith moved an executive motion on World Health Day in recognition of the theme "Our Planet, Our Health" on 7 April this year:

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) each year the World Health Organization celebrates World Health Day to promote global awareness of the importance of health and focus attention on a specific theme that impacts people all over the world; and
- (b) that World Health Day in 2022 is occurring on 7 April and the 2022 theme is "Our planet, our health";

We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the Country where we live, work and travel upon, and to the Elders, past, present and future.

(2) recognises the impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of people and on the health of the planet;

(3) notes the ACT Government:

(a) has joined the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network; and

(b) is investigating a formal commitment to the World Health Organization's COP26 Health Programme goals;

(4) acknowledges the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world and the ACT; and

(5) conveys its thanks to all health workers who have provided exceptional care throughout this pandemic and continue to protect the ACT community.

You can pull from the speech on page

25: (<https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/10th-assembly/2022/PDF/20220407.pdf>).

On 19-20 October 2022 (<https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/10th-assembly/2022/PDF/P221019.pdf> , <https://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/10th-assembly/2022/PDF/P221020.pdf>), the Assembly passed a motion which called on the ACT Government to:

(a) continue delivering the *ACT Climate Change Strategy 2019-2025* and the *Bushfire Smoke and Air Quality Strategy 2020-2025* to ensure that public health services and the community are prepared for the impacts of climate change;

(b) continue to work with the Albanese Government, through National Cabinet and Health Ministers' meetings to support the development of a National Climate Health Strategy;

(c) develop a nation leading ACT climate change and health plan that reflects the ongoing work of National Cabinet and Health Ministers on a National Climate Health Strategy;

(d) continue to participate in knowledge and information sharing through the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health and expedite consideration of formal membership;

(e) ensure that the ACT Health Directorate collects and reports on data to monitor progress against resilience indicators, including continuation of the longitudinal survey and climate-related health impacts and costs; and

(f) report back to the ACT Legislative Assembly by the last sitting of 2023.

The Minister's speech starts on pg 103.

Statement from South Australia's Health and Wellbeing Minister Chris Picton

I absolutely understand the importance of recognising the correlation between climate change and health outcomes, and the need for action to mitigate these risks.

Dr Susan Close MP, as the state's Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate, Environment and Water, recently attended COP27 in Egypt on behalf of the South Australian Government.

Within the first three months of coming to Government, Minister Close also led the introduction and passing of a motion in SA Parliament that reaffirmed the urgent need to decarbonise the South Australian economy and shift to renewable sources of energy.

Only last week in my capacity as the SA Minister for Health and Wellbeing, I met with several representatives of Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) to hear their ideas. I also took part in the Climate and Health Alliance Leadership Roundtable on 29 June, recognising the importance of developing health-specific climate plans to align the health system with SA's climate targets.

As one of the state's major projects, there will be a strong emphasis on sustainability during the design of the new Women's and Children's Hospital, including an all-electric design that will not be powered by fossil fuels. This is in line with the pathway to net zero emissions.

Tweets are not representative of a government's position, and the Malinauskas Labor Government is absolutely committed to addressing the ever-present threat of climate change as we invest in the public health system.

Environmental health and the health of individuals are correlated.

In recent times, South Australians have experienced extreme flooding, particularly throughout the Riverland.

The Malinauskas Government has taken a whole-of-government response to this.

In terms of health, we have rolled out a JEV vaccination program to respond to the increased prevalence of mosquitoes, impacted by recent La Nina events.

These recent events have also had immense impacts on the mental health of South Australians which is why we have invested an extra \$1 million in mental health for those impacted by the floods.

Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Yvette D'Ath, Queensland

You may find a message from Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, the Honourable Yvette D'Ath in the Queensland Health climate risk strategy 2021 – 2026 helpful. It can be found [here](#).

Attributable to Queensland Health spokesperson:

As Queensland's major health service provider, we recognise the urgency for climate action and are committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

To align with the Queensland Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050, we have embedded climate risk considerations, including the reduction of emissions, into plans, policies, and operations.

We continue to partner with peak professional and representative groups, as well as health and research organisations, in our response to climate risk. Our ongoing collaboration with universities and other research providers at a state, national, and international level to identify knowledge needs, foster research and build cost effective and innovative solutions is vital.

Queensland Health established the Office of Hospital Sustainability which is currently rolling out an Emissions Reduction Program to install solar and other energy conservation measures at health facilities across the state. Over the past 18 months solar installations have been completed at 28 Queensland facilities, with a further 14 solar installations in the pipeline and another 20 currently under assessment.

We are also developing construction standards to improve health infrastructure and minimise whole-of-life cycle carbon emissions, as well as training Hospital and Health Services, in partnership with the Climate Health Alliance, in the adoption of the [Climate Change Adaptation Planning Guidelines](#).

Queensland Health's membership to the NGO Global Green and Healthy Hospitals further demonstrates our commitment to reducing our environmental footprint.

Victorian Department of Health

Head of Media at Victorian Department of Health replied that the Department was following caretaker protocols for much of the period we conducted the review.

They also stated that: "The findings you have outlined relate to largely Commonwealth led-matters – so we're unable to comment on those."

Chief Minister and Minister for Health, Natasha Fyles

"As Minister for Health, I have been supporting the progress of climate change reforms across NT Health over the past 6 years. NT Health has identified the impact of climate change on health as an emerging priority. This is why we are working on a number of measures to address the effect of climate change which include reducing the department's carbon footprint, and we have created the position of Director, NT Health Sustainable Action. We are also part of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Program.

"To date, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Hospitals have implemented a range of initiatives including LED lighting upgrades, commitment to the removal of disposable Styrofoam cups and the development of an ASH Waste Action Plan. Alice Springs Hospital has also adapted a Co-generation system which is cheaper and more

environmentally friendly energy source. The Royal Darwin (RDH) and Palmerston Regional Hospital are also exploring ways to reduce pharmaceutical waste along with changing and improving other waste disposal streams.

“Led by staff and volunteers, more than 250 native trees and shrubs have been planted on the RDH campus, to provide cool, restorative green spaces for staff and visitors to use, while assisting in lowering our emissions. Three electric vehicle charging stations have already been installed at the campus, with another three to open at the public hospital carpark soon.”