

The Medical Journal of Australia • MJA

MEDIA RELEASE

MAKING OUR HEALTH SYSTEMS CLIMATE CHANGE-PROOF

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01am Monday 15 April 2019

AUSTRALIA'S health systems must be strengthened to cope with the coming challenges of climate change, according to the authors of a Perspective published by the Medical Journal of Australia.

"Australia is geophysically stable, protecting us to some extent from catastrophic events such as earthquakes and tsunamis, but we are vulnerable to climate-related disasters and emergencies, including heatwaves, bushfires, droughts, cyclones and floods, the frequency, intensity and duration of which are being amplified by climate change," wrote Professor Gerard FitzGerald, Professor of Public Health at the Queensland University of Technology, and colleagues.

A whole-of-system approach and improvements to the timeliness of disease surveillance were needed, they wrote.

"Current disease notification systems are slow, and monitoring of the response capacity of the health system relies on individuals recognising and reporting emerging problems," FitzGerald and colleagues wrote. "Enhanced real time surveillance of ambulance, emergency department, and hospital capacities and of patterns of demand should enable more timely recognition of new problems and increase the response capability of the health system."

"Thirdly, we need to determine the standards of care relevant to particular situations.

"A comprehensive whole-of-system approach will help Australia build a resilient health system that can adapt to the challenges of climate change. The task will not be easy, and there will inevitably be difficult discussions for all health professionals," they concluded.

"Whole-of-system approaches are feasible if they are built upon routine processes and they respectfully engage all elements of the health system, both institutional and community-based."

Please remember to credit *The MJA*.

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.

CONTACTS: Niki Widdowson
Media Officer
Queensland University of Technology
Email: n.widdowson@qut.edu.au