

The Medical Journal of Australia • MJA

MEDIA RELEASE

ANOTHER YEAR OF CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY FAILURE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.30am AEDT Thursday 14 November 2019

THE lack of national policy means that Australia remains at significant risk of declines in health due to climate change, meaning substantial and sustained national action is urgently required, according to the authors of the 2019 *MJA-Lancet* Countdown report published online today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

“In a year marked by an Australian federal election in which climate change featured prominently, we find mixed progress on health and climate change in this country,” wrote the authors, led by Associate Professor Paul Beggs, from Macquarie University’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

“There has been progress in renewable energy generation, including substantial employment increases in this sector. There has also been some progress at state and local government level.

“However, there continues to be no engagement on health and climate change in the Australian federal Parliament, and Australia performs poorly across many of the indicators in comparison to other developed countries; for example, it is one of the world’s largest net exporters of coal and its electricity generation from low carbon sources is low.

“We also find significantly increasing exposure of Australians to heatwaves and, in most states and territories, continuing elevated suicide rates at higher temperatures.”

The 2019 update tracked progress on health and climate change in Australia across the same five broad domains and many of the same indicators as in 2018, the authors wrote. A number of new indicators were introduced this year, including one focused on wildfire exposure, and another on engagement in health and climate change in the corporate sector.

“The lack of Australian national policy to address threats of climate change to health — and the consequent failure to realise the enormous opportunities that doing so would afford our nation — is disappointing to say the least,” Beggs and colleagues concluded.

“This work is urgent and should be undertaken within a complex systems thinking framework. As a direct result of this failure, we conclude that Australia remains at significant risk of declines in health due to climate change, and that substantial and sustained national action is urgently required in order to prevent this.”

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