



Climate an all-consuming health issue

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The fires and drought engulfing Australia have confronted Australians with the dire health consequences of climate change and the imperative for an urgent and credible response, the Consumers Health Forum and Climate and Health Alliance said today.

“Millions of people have witnessed the direct impact of climate change, whether it be as a result of health services strained by bush fire, respiratory problems triggered by smoke, or mental and social issues aggravated by fire and drought,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

Climate and Health Alliance Executive Director Fiona Armstrong said: “We are pleased to have the Consumers Health Forum of Australia's voice behind the call for the Federal and NSW governments to respond to the public health emergency created by the air pollution from bushfires.

“Climate change is going to get much worse and we will see more and more of these events impacting people's health, which will place further pressure on our already strained health system. Federal and state governments must invest in our health system to ensure it is able to meet the needs of the community in a climate-changed world.”

Ms Wells said CHF had joined the Climate and Health Alliance and joined over 25 other leading health organisations to sign the [joint statement](#) because of need to highlight how profound the health and other effects of climate change is on consumers and communities: our constituency. We know that a concerted campaign by so many committed health groups is more necessary than ever.

“We support CAHA’s call for all of our political leaders to acknowledge the health and environmental emergency of climate change, and to step up and commit to urgent climate action by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with what the science demands.

“We also need further investment in primary healthcare services, emergency department capacity to respond to increasing demand and mental health services.

“CHF bases its advocacy on evidence. That evidence of climate change is all around us, in the record-breaking extent of fires, unprecedented drought and temperatures.

“The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been warning for years of the increased threats to health, particularly in lower income populations, predominantly within tropical/subtropical countries.

“We know that young people are particularly concerned about climate change and the need for action. CHF has established the Youth Health Forum which offers a platform for younger Australians to engage with climate implications of health, including the effects of climate catastrophes and new diseases.

“The Consumers Health Forum will work with the Climate and Health Alliance to press for more prompt and effective action by Australian governments to take more effective action to reduce greenhouse emissions and protect the population from unhealthy climate change,” Ms Wells said.

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