



Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

Embargoed until 11am, Thursday 21 November 2019

ACEM declares climate change a medical emergency

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) has declared climate change a medical emergency during the final day of its Annual Scientific Meeting in Hobart.

The declaration is contained in the College's new Position Statement on *Climate change and health* which acknowledges the increasing pressures already-strained hospital emergency departments (EDs) will continue to face as the effects of climate change accelerate and become more pronounced.

ACEM's Position Statement reads:

ACEM considers climate change and the associated health impacts to be a population health emergency.

Climate change presents an immediate risk to the capacity and ability of EDs, health systems and the medical workforce to cope with increased demand and more frequent and intense disasters. Climate change is a medical emergency; it thus demands an emergency response. ACEM calls for urgent action to establish mechanisms to mitigate and adapt to these threats to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our health systems. There is an immediate need for EDs to be resourced in order to meet increased demand resulting from climate change.

ACEM calls on governments at all levels, including the Commonwealth of Australia and the New Zealand Government, to take immediate and sustained action to address and mitigate the impacts that this climate emergency presents.

ACEM supports efforts to minimise the impact of climate change and actively supports measures to reduce the carbon footprint of hospitals and health systems.

Making the declaration in Hobart today, ACEM President Dr John Bonning said: "Today ACEM joins other peak medical bodies from Australia, New Zealand and the world in declaring climate change and the threats it poses, a medical emergency."

"The evidence is clear", said Dr Bonning. "Projections show that climate change will cause a significant rise in the number of overall ED presentations, an increase in the complexity of presentations as well as surges resulting from climate disasters.

"With the research also showing that climate change will exacerbate existing health inequities, we have an obligation and responsibility as emergency doctors to speak up, take action ourselves and demand action from government.

"EDs and hospitals also have important roles to play in mitigating climate change and improving sustainability, as our hospital systems are currently a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

"We also recognise that emergency physicians have a role as resource stewards and advocates in their departments and healthcare organisations to reduce waste and emissions.

“For the good of our patients, hospitals, communities and world, we must take urgent action on this population health emergency.”

Access the full ACEM Position Statement on *Climate change and health*, complete with recommendations for governments, health systems and EDs [here](#).

Background

ACEM is the peak body for emergency medicine in Australia and New Zealand, responsible for training emergency physicians and advancement of professional standards. www.acem.org.au

Media Contact

Andrew MacDonald

andrew.macdonald@acem.org.au

0498 068 023