



**Friday 5 February 2021**  
**Media Release**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 AEST FRIDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2021**  
**TIME IS RUNNING OUT.....CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION IS NEEDED NOW!**

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Tasmania is joining the Federal AMA, the British Medical Association (BMA) and the American Medical Association in declaring climate change a medical emergency.

Dr Helen McArdle President AMA Tasmania said today, "AMA Tasmania joins with Federal AMA as an association made up of doctors actively supporting the adoption of the Climate Change Bill being considered by the Australian Senate.

"AMA Tasmania calls upon the Tasmanian Government to do everything it can to reduce further Tasmania's carbon emissions and plan for Tasmanians' future medical needs as a consequence of climate change impacting on people's health.

"We know that climate change impacts are leading to more bushfires, more severe weather events and hotter summers, all of which impact people's health.

"Doctors see the impact on patients' health, including heat-related conditions, cardiorespiratory illnesses, infectious disease outbreaks and post-traumatic stress disorder for those who have lived through flood and fire events.

"Studies are now being undertaken in Australia into the effects of bushfire smoke on pregnant woman and their babies. Evidence suggests that exposure to bushfire smoke for prolonged periods, as happened in recent years in the Huon Valley and NSW (New South Wales), may lead to more premature babies and decreased birth weight."

Dr McArdle said that it was widely recognised that those regions exhibiting inadequate health infrastructure are the least able to adapt, prepare and respond to the variety of increased health risks in a changing climate.

"All official data confirms that Australia's greenhouse gas emissions along with the earth's temperature, continue to rise. The science is clear. Without rapid cuts in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, this will have increasingly destructive and irreversible impacts on life on earth.

"The window of opportunity for action is closing fast.

"It is over ten years ago that climate change was recognised as the most significant global health threat of the 21st century. Scientists are now warning we have less than ten years to halt the worldwide rise

of greenhouse gas emissions to avoid devastating consequences and potentially catastrophic risk to human health.

"The WHO (World Health Organisation) and other researchers have identified multiple areas where a changing climate may have an adverse impact on health outcomes including aggravation of various chronic medical conditions, challenges to mental health, water and food insecurity, changes to the price and quality of fresh food, and increasing the likelihood of poor nutrition. Injury and mortality from increasingly severe weather events and increases in the transmission effect of airborne diseases.

"Other social issues related to climate change include decreased work capacity, increased climate migration, conflict, and homelessness."

Dr Clare Smith, a recently retired General Practitioner, said that she was seeing more patients questioning whether to have children due to their concerns about climate change.

"Even more alarming than the evidence linking air pollution and heat exposure with adverse pregnancy outcomes is the climate anxiety many Tasmanian women are experiencing leading them to reconsider or question their future fertility intentions.

"They know that that if we don't do more to fight climate change now, the effects on the health of their children will only get worse."

Dr McArdle added that while many of the world's scientists, supported by governments, rushed to find a vaccine to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, the same unified action across the world on climate change is required to help mitigate impending threats to our environment, health, and very existence.

"While these themes are representative of climate change and health issues worldwide, rather than a public campaign on adaptation, it is time for the Tasmanian Government to implement plans and lobby for a complete and collective change for our state, our nation and our planet now."

Small changes such as using solar energy can make the biggest impact, and AMA House has now joined with the millions of Australians, already using solar energy to generate electricity.

"We need to do everything we can to develop an effective ambitious Tasmanian centric strategy for health and climate change. AMA Tasmania stands ready to help drive those changes." >>>ENDS

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