



MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent action needed to tackle ‘silent health crisis’ of rising temperatures

Australia’s leading minds on environmental health are coming together at the Australian Medical Association (AMA) in Canberra today to discuss the impacts of climate change and rising temperatures on human health.

With 2024 the hottest year on record, and the first calendar year in which the average global temperature was more than 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times, the AMA is advocating for collaborative action on climate change and the development of a national heat and health plan, with the independent Centre for Disease Control playing an integral role.

The AMA was one of the first organisations of its kind to take a stand on climate change more than 20 years ago and is bringing clinical insight into discussions on climate change and its targets.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said the *Rising temperatures, rising risks* roundtable event will explore contemporary, practical solutions to mitigate the effects of soaring temperatures and enduring heatwaves on human health.

“Climate change is happening now, and it is having major impacts on all aspects of our lives, but we cannot afford to ignore the impacts it is having on our health,” Dr McMullen said.

“Ambulance callouts already increase by 18 per cent during extreme heat events and more than 60 per cent of deaths that are related to hot weather conditions are in the most disadvantaged areas of Australia.”

The roundtable aims to gather and analyse clinical insights to mitigate the health impacts of extreme heat and heatwaves, with a specific focus on safeguarding those who already face health disparities due to their socio-economic circumstances.

It aims to identify gaps in health service delivery that hinder effective responses to extreme heat events and explore and recommend appropriate strategies to inform evidence-based public health policy on extreme heat events.

Speakers include Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney; Professor of Heat and Health at the University of Sydney, Professor Ollie Jay; CEO of the Australian Indigenous Doctor’s Association, Ms Donna Burns; general practitioner Dr Kim Loo; and cardiologist Dr Arnagretta Hunter, of the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions at the Australian National University.

Dr McMullen said heatwaves are a “silent health crisis” that results in both physiological and psychological impacts on people’s health, as well as affecting critical infrastructure and health service provision.

“The effects of heat and rising temperatures on our health are real, and they are already being felt across our health system, at a time when it is already struggling,” Dr McMullen said.

“We need to act, and we need to act now.”

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