

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604  
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499  
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**Transcript:** AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, ABC Radio Melbourne, *Mornings with Jon Faine*, Tuesday, 3 September 2019

**Subject:** Climate Change

---

**JON FAINE:** The AMA says there's scientific evidence indicating that climate change will have severe impact on patients and communities, as they announced today that they - the AMA, the doctors' association - think that climate change is a health emergency, not just a political one, and an environmental one. Tony Bartone is the President of the AMA. Dr Bartone, good morning to you.

**TONY BARTONE:** Good morning, Jon.

**JON FAINE:** Are you crossing a line here and becoming activists instead of doctors?

**TONY BARTONE:** Jon, look, I'd like to think that it's just about following the common sense, the scientific evidence, and the impact on the health and welfare of our community and our population at large. It's not just us, it's countless other medical and health organisations around the world. We've had the British Medical Association last month. We've had the American Medical Association the month before. The World Health Organisation in 2018. They've all looked at the facts, looked at the science, and come to the conclusion which has led them to say that it is a health emergency, it is impacting on the health of humans on this planet now...

**JON FAINE:** [Interrupts] How does it impact on our lives right now, rather than in 2050 or a hundred years?

**TONY BARTONE:** So we're already seeing, for example, clearly increased number of weather events and the heat stress associated with extremes in weather patterns. And that's already putting increased people at risk from the effects of heat stress, and we've seen the effects in terms of increased presentations into our emergency departments and into our hospitals over those months. So that's clearly getting very tangible and very visible. But we can look deeper. We can see the effects on our farming community, on agricultural outputs and products that are showing that already we're, you know, having this insecurity when it comes to the food bowl in terms of availability of food. We've seen increase in vector-borne diseases in areas where you wouldn't normally associate them because ...

**JON FAINE:** [Interrupts] Sorry, a vector-borne disease, you mean mosquito-borne and so on?

**TONY BARTONE:** Yeah, exactly, exactly. So the things we- in areas where you wouldn't have normally associated those illnesses with being transmitted by mosquitoes, for example, in previous times gone by, and that's because of changing weather patterns. But then there's the secondary impacts of the mental health and stresses that come from dealing with all those increased burdens. So it's already there but it's only going to get worse.

So yes, it may not be calamitous right at this very minute but it certainly will be if we do nothing about it. And that's the reason for declaring the emergency, declaring the need for

action. We need both - not only just a national coordinated environmental strategy, but we also need to have - what we're calling for is a Sustainable Development Unit, which helps to deal with our own footprint as a healthcare association: Seven per cent of the carbon footprint in this country is due to the healthcare sector, and we need to do- be much more accountable and much more in control of how we can minimise our own footprint, you might say, in that equation.

**JON FAINE:** And just finally, is it internally divisive within an organisation where people principally gather to talk about issues of common interest do with the way the health system works, are there people within the AMA, are there doctors saying we should stay out of this?

**TONY BARTONE:** We are a broad church, and we obviously come from the community at large, so of course there's a variety of views. But in terms of our background as being scientists and trained in that discipline, we follow the facts and we follow the evidence.

Now, in terms of, you know, you might say, are we advocating more so in the space that previously maybe we haven't? Well, we've always said it's about the patient. And when it starts to impact on our patients, we have a duty to start to ensure our advocacy follows their needs.

**JON FAINE:** Thank you indeed, Tony Bartone. Dr Tony Bartone is President of the AMA.

---

3 September 2019

CONTACT:     John Flannery           02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761  
                  Maria Hawthorne       02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: [http://twitter.com/ama\\_media](http://twitter.com/ama_media)

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Follow *Australian Medicine* on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/amaausmed>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>