

**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 Vice President, Dr Chris Zappala, Sky News Live, *The Kenny Report*,  
 Wednesday, 4 September 2019

**Subject:** Climate Change

---

**CHRIS KENNY:** Now, as I said earlier, the Australian Medical Association has declared a climate-induced health emergency in this country. To find out more about it, I'm joined by Christopher Zappala, who's the Vice President of the Australian Medical Association. He joins us from Brisbane. Thanks for joining us, Dr Zappala.

Tell us - why on earth is there a health emergency in this country? What's the evidence for that?

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** There's a large amount of mounting evidence, actually, Chris. If we look at reports, for example, from the World Health Organisation and the United Nations, as well as medical literature here in Australia, in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, there's mounting evidence that we have significant health consequences to bear from rising temperatures across the Earth. But also the consequent changes in weather patterns, our ability to grow food, for example, and disruption of ecosystems - that has a very real impact on health. And that's of course in addition to-

**CHRIS KENNY:** [Interrupts] Yeah. We're all aware, Doctor, about the predictions of what could happen if we see the global warming that is forecast. But where is the evidence now that there's [audio skip] from changing climate in Australia?

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** Well, take, for example, pollution. So we know that greenhouse gases are increasing and the amount of pollution and particulate matter in the atmosphere-

**CHRIS KENNY:** [Interrupts] Well, that's- hang on. Hang on. That's a separate issue there. You want to talk about particulate pollution. We all...

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** [Talks over] No, no.

**CHRIS KENNY:** ...know about the problems of air pollution, but you're talking about climate change. What is the evidence that there has been any health impact in Australia from climate change?

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** Look, I don't think we should be sceptical about this. It's a good thing that we worry about the health of Australians, and I think doctors are right to be concerned about this. The reason that pollution is relevant is because it's the reliance on carbon fuels, the increasing greenhouse gases, that relate directly to the increasing temperature and the climate problem, and as a consequence of all of that, we're seeing direct health effects and there has been measurable impact on cardiovascular health [audio skip] and also an impact on mortality.

And, as I said to you, there is evidence produced from the World Health Organisation and in Australia, in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, that is relevant here today. But remember that it's not just what we can see now, we do have to be worried about the future and we do have to

take action to mitigate against what might be coming. So I think it's very appropriate that we be forward thinking here and take notice of the projections as well.

**CHRIS KENNY:** You're talking about a health emergency though. Then, can you quote the evidence that demonstrates any directly climate-linked health problems, growing health problems, in Australia? Are there any?

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** Well, there's one I've referred to. If we look at, for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is a United Nations body and associated with the World Health Organisation, they have corralled all of the evidence together very clearly, and they've called it a health emergency as well, and they have shown very clearly - and that report was released last October - that more action needs to be taken. The British Medical Association has said the same, the American Medical Association has said the same, that we have a health emergency. In other words, that more action needs to be taken and all of that...

**CHRIS KENNY:** [Talks over] But is it-

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** ...evidence have been corralled.

**CHRIS KENNY:** This is all very fine. We play into that global debate and jump on board with those sort of predictions. But the health problems we're dealing with in the here and now - even reported by *The Guardian* - are growing numbers of elderly people dying from the cold in Europe. And even in our own country, we've had reports this year of growing numbers of Australians, elderly Australians, dying and being admitted to hospital with hypothermia in this country because they cannot afford their electricity bills in winter.

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** Well, I think that's a slightly separate problem. I mean, you're going [audio skip] climate change-

**CHRIS KENNY:** [Interrupts] [Audio skip] That's a direct health consequence of higher electricity prices driven by climate policies. Is that not a concern?

**CHRIS ZAPPALA:** Well, of course we want people to be able to afford electricity and have access to the basics. I mean, of course that's a given. But at some point, there is going to have to be a transition, and we're going to have to recognise that the fossil fuels aren't going to last forever, and we're going to need to transition to something. And it needs to be a positive process that transitions us to that, but doesn't create the stresses that you're talking about.

**CHRIS KENNY:** Thanks for joining us ... that's Dr Christopher Zappala there from the AMA.

---

4 September 2019

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