

Dr Sarah Joyce
Project Director
Climate Health WA Inquiry
Public and Aboriginal Health Division
Department of Health
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By email: climatehealthwa@health.wa.gov.au

Dear Dr Joyce

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Western Australian Department of Health for conducting an inquiry into the impacts of climate change on health in Western Australia, the first statutory inquiry of its kind in Australia.

ACN is concerned about the current and future impacts climate change is having on the health and wellbeing of people and communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in 2015 that climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century¹. The WHO predicts that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to result in 250,000 additional deaths globally per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress². ACN is concerned by these predictions and encourages practices to reduce the impact of climate change on human health. ACN supports the 'Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia' developed by the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA). This Framework provides a roadmap to address the health consequences resulting from climate change. ACN encourages the Western Australian Government to adopt and implement this Framework, which can be read on the CAHA website, here: <https://www.caha.org.au/national-strategy-climate-health-wellbeing>.

Despite the challenges posed by climate change, ACN is optimistic that nurses can play an instrumental role in mitigating climate change effects and to support people and communities to adapt effectively to its impacts. ACN is the pre-eminent and national leader of the nursing profession in Australia. ACN develops and inspires nurses by delivering prestigious leadership programs such as our Emerging Nurse Leaders and Mid-Career Nurse Leadership Programs which educate, support and transform nursing leaders. Nurses have played a key role in climate change relevant initiatives including: developing climate-informed health programs for emerging infectious and communicable diseases, engaging in sustainable practices in the health sector, engaging in health and climate research, and contributing to policy and governance reviews³.

At our recent annual National Nursing Forum, ACN's Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN moderated an interactive and highly engaging panel discussion with four of ACN's Emerging Nurse Leaders. The discussion focused on the health impacts of climate change as well as

¹ World Health Organization 2015, *WHO calls for urgent action to protect health from climate change – Sign the call*. Available from: <https://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>

² World Health Organization 2019, *Climate change and health*. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

³ Watts N, Neil Adger W, Agnolucci P, et al. Health and climate change: policy responses to protect Public health. *Lancet* [Internet]. 2015 [cited 26 August 2019]; 386:1861–914. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60854-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60854-6)

other environmental concerns such as waste management in health care. Many audience participants described undertaking initiatives to reduce their environmental impact such as recycling and efforts to cut carbon pollution.

ACN values the expertise of its members in our Climate and Health Community of Interest (COI). The COI has provided valuable input to ACN on climate and other environmental related matters. This included assisting with the writing of our Position Statement titled 'Climate and the nursing profession' which has since been replaced by ACN's adoption of the International Council of Nurses Position Statement titled 'Nurses, climate change and health' which I encourage you to read on our website. The link is provided here: <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/ICN-position-statement-nurses-climate-change-health-final.pdf>.

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact me, Dr Carolyn Stapleton FACN, Manager Policy and Advocacy, at Carolyn.Stapleton@acn.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

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