



## **DEA responds to the hottest and driest year on record**

DEA members around Australia are speaking out about the health impacts of the bushfires and the climate emergency. Our members have been meeting with politicians and have featured in a number of significant media stories during the past month. Shadow Minister for Health, Chris Bowen, wrote of the link between climate and health after months of lobbying and meetings by DEA NSW member Kim Loo. Minister Bowen cited DEA in a recent article for the Sydney Morning Herald in which he wrote "Climate change is so dangerous to health that it threatens to unwind 50 years of progress in improving public health outcomes. Australia is just as, if not more, exposed than other nations." Read Minister Bowen's full article:

[The warming planet is already killing people so health policy must catch up](#)

The severity of increasing temperatures in Australia have been the subject of a range of statements and reports.

On the 9th of January the **Bureau of Meteorology** released its Annual Climate Statement 2019:

[periods of extreme heat in 2019 bookend Australia's warmest and driest year on record.](#)

**The Australian Academy of Science** released a Statement regarding Australian bushfires on the 10th January which says, in part, "Everything, including building standards, habitat restoration, biodiversity and species preservation, and land, water, and wildlife management will need careful and measured consideration" and "All the while, Australia must take stronger action as its part of the world wide commitment to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees C above the long term average..."

And the **World Meteorological Organisation** reported that 2018 was the second hottest on record.

[Australia has 'hottest, driest' year on record as 2019 named second-hottest year worldwide](#)

, WMO says and **NASA** confirmed that the period 2010-2019 was the hottest decade on record. Gavin Schmidt, Director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, said "We end up with an attribution of these trends to human activity pretty much at the 100% level... All of the trends are effectively anthropogenic at this point".

As bushfires continue to ravage the country, 81 Laureates of the **Research Council** sent an "open letter to Australia":

[The outlook for humans is dire without urgent action 81 laureates letter to Australia](#)

(Sydney Morning Herald Jan 29 2020) urging more action on climate change. Over 200 scientists joined to urge Canberra to do more:

[Scientists call on MPs to urgently reduce australia's emissions amid bushfire crisis](#)

(The Guardian Feb 3 2020).

### **Bushfire aid**

To donate to the bushfire emergency please click [here](#)

## **iDEA**

The ACT team have organised an exciting program of speakers and interactive events for this year's iDEA conference in Canberra April 4th and 5th. The ACT has an ambitious climate action agenda and yet so many of the federal politicians there are still unable to accept the reality of what confronts them. Let's make the health message loud and clear at iDEA 2020.

For further information on the conference please click [here](#)

## **Office Move and thanks to Joy Oddy**

The start of 2020 saw the move of DEA's head office from South Australia to Victoria. Now located in a co-working space at T.O.M.S

place, 1 Tripovich Street, Brunswick, please feel free to drop in and say hello to Denise, Carmela and Kylie. The move however meant that we farewelled Joy Oddy as our Administration Officer. Joy has been with DEA for over 10 years and has provided exceptional professional service to our members and in particular amazing support to the Board. Thank you Joy for your dedication and commitment to DEA and we wish you the very best in your future endeavours.

## **Adani and Siemens**

In the lead-up to the Siemens shareholder meeting, DEA organised an open letter to the CEO and Board of Siemens calling for them to end their association with the Adani coal mine. The letter was signed by international and national health organisation including the Global Climate and health Alliance, Health Care without Harm, Physicians for Social responsibility (USA) and Medact (UK). The joint statement can be read

<https://www.dea.org.au/leading-health-groups-issue-joint-statement-calling-for-siemens-to-stop-adani/>

The action is a foray into working collaboratively across continents and language with a close working arrangement with KLUG (German Climate and Health Alliance). Thank you to all members who took the time to write to Siemens leading into this action. The extraordinary response from environmental and health groups across the world on this issue has been amazing to witness and speaks to the next level of our work engaging across borders.

## **Doctors on the frontline**

Doctors everywhere are seeing the impacts of bushfires, even in built up areas where smoke is creating immediate health risks-

[ABC News: Smoke effects and anxiety at GPs](#)

And Dr Jeffrey Lee of Cobargo who's surgery burned down and who is now practicing from a caravan said-*'I am seeing people who have lost their houses, had near death experiences, and lost animals, which for most of them is more distressing than losing their homes'*

[ABC News: Doctor practises from caravan after losing surgery in bushfire](#)

## **News from the States**

## **Australian Capital Territory**

Dr Arnagretta Hunter was interviewed by Boston's National Public Radio on the bushfires and health impacts of the bushfire smoke.

[Health impacts of fires](#)

Arnagretta's personal experience of the bushfire was featured in iNews on 4 January 2020.

[Australian wildfires: Canberra doctor interviewed on climate crisis](#)

**Smoke and Mirrors: The Australian healthcare system is not prepared for the climate crisis:** Dr Arnagretta Hunter writes that health policy has failed to recognise climate change as a threat to Australians' health and has so far failed to coordinate action to mitigate the health consequences of natural disasters. [Check out the article here](#)

## **New South Wales**

January has been a busy month for NSW DEA members with members participating in a number of events across the state.

### **Sydney Climate March**

Amidst the smoke haze generated from the bushfires, Sydney DEA Members joined approximately 30 000 people to demand climate action. The climate march brought the Sydney CBD to a standstill, as protesters walked from town hall to Hyde Park.

**Photo credit: Sydney Morning Herald/Isabella Porras**

### **Parramatta Climate Rally**

Dr Kim Loo spoke at a climate rally in Parramatta, connecting climate justice to the health impacts of climate change.

### **Opposing expansion of Glencore's Glendell mine.**

DEA NSW Chair, Dr John Van Der Kallen, was featured in the Newcastle Herald expressing opposition to the proposed expansion of Glencore's

Glendell mine. [See the article here](#)>

Photo credit: Newcastle Herald/ Simone De Peak – DEA NSW Chair, Dr John Van Der Kallen

### **Fire ravaged communities victims of climate change.**

Bateman's Bay GP Dr Michelle Hamrosi spoke on Radio National Breakfast and her words reflect what is happening across much of Australia:- [Fire ravaged communities victims of climate change](#)

### **Tasmania**

#### **Forest Bathing Walking Tour – 22 February 2020 Time: 9.30 - 12.00**

Self care is so important and we need to take the time to learn to reconnect to ourselves, each other and the planet. Kara Spence, certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide will lead you on a mindful journey to awaken your senses and open the doorway to nature's healing gifts. 2.5 hours. \$65 working and \$30 students. Inc. guide, park fees, bush tea and small snack. Learn some simple yet powerful ways to connect to nature for your well-being.

[For further information click here](#)

### **Victoria**

We held a successful friend and fundraising end of year social event in December. It was great to welcome new members and to introduce Executive Officer Denise Cauchi to Melbourne locals. Thanks to Jimmy Ingram for organising a great evening.

DEA is proud to be a partner to a [National Climate Emergency Summit](#), being held in Melbourne on Feb 14-15th, with Dr Richard Yin speaking at one of the sessions. The summit is being held in Melbourne in conjunction with the [National Sustainable Living Festival](#).

Events run from Feb 1st to 29th across various locations and include talks, workshops, displays, art and films. DEA members, including Prof Fiona Stanley, visited Liberal MP Dr Katie Allen, member for Higgins recently to discuss the health impacts and government responses concerning our climate emergency. Plans are underway to meet with other coalition Victorian MPs leading up to Zali Steggall's proposed [climate change bill](#).

Does your hospital or clinic use ethically sourced paper or is it made from on-going logging of Australia's remaining native forests? DEA member Xavier Harvey has been involved in driving Austin Health to sign the Ethical Paper pledge and thereby commit to environmentally certified procurement.

Read the Austin Health story here: [Caring for Country](#)

If you would like to lobby your health service to make the switch, Xavier can offer advice and support. Please contact Xavier on 0432563107 or xavharv@pm.me.

The Victorian committee has recently completed a submission addressing the risks from open flued gas heaters. We are also working to develop an information document regarding the health effects of indoor gas and air pollution.

## **South Australia**

### **Planning for 2020**

The DEA South Australia Committee will meet for the first time for 2020 on 12 February with a big problem – but one we are delighted to have! Near the end of each year we have sent a request to our SA members seeking expressions of interest for the incoming DEA SA Committee – usually with no responses! This year, in addition to many of the 2019 Committee indicating an interest to continue, we have been “inundated” with interest from our members. We have invited all interested to attend our first Committee meeting for 2020 on February 12th where we’ll form a functional Committee and discuss a number of Special Purpose Groups to ensure all those who have expressed interest have opportunities to contribute to our work.

At this meeting the current Chair, Doug Shaw, and Secretary, John Willoughby, will be stepping down after over 5 years in these roles. We will announce the incoming Chair, Secretary, Committee members and Special Purpose Groups after the February meeting.

### **Thank You, Joy**

The DEA national office has now moved from Adelaide to Melbourne and the DEA SA Committee take this opportunity to thank Joy Oddy for her years of service to DEA, especially to the DEA South Australia Committee and SA members, who have particularly benefited from Joy’s services. We wish Joy all the best for the future.

## Meetings and Visits

On January 29th DEA met with the **SA Chief Public Health Officer**, A/Prof Nicola Spurrier who is a paediatrician and public health physician. We were joined by SA AMA President Dr Chris Moy. Ingo Weber, Kimberley Humphrey, Graeme McLeay and student Lucy Brown attended for DEA. We spoke of the urgency of action on climate change, mitigation and adaptation in the health sector, the possibility of Health Officers declaring a climate emergency, and the need for improving the NEPM (Air Quality) standards.

We have a number of meetings and visits planned which will be reported on in the next newsletter. We will continue to advocate for the declaration of a climate health emergency, amongst other issues. Sadly, we have an even stronger basis for this call with the devastating bushfires in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island.

**Doctors for Nutrition** kindly offered DEA a booth at the Nutrition Symposium held in Adelaide on Sunday February 2nd. Drs Ingo Weber and Hubertus Jersmann and student Lucy Brown attended. DFN mount a strong case for a plant- based diet on grounds of health, climate and animal welfare. <https://www.doctorsfornutrition.org/news>

## Biodiversity

We are in the midst of a cataclysmic unfolding of natural disasters and are bearing witness to the expected outcome of years of inaction on climate change and a national failure to protect of nature. Bushfires, smoke haze, severe storms and flooding have provided the backdrop to our summer this year in Australia.

The toll of the fires on the National Parks many of us holiday in annually is overwhelmingly difficult to contemplate. Croajingalong NP near Mallacoota in Victoria is pretty much all burnt, including the camp ground my family have visited for years, whilst all along the coast of New South Wales the bush and coast is either currently burning or has been burnt in the last few months. I wrote about this in Open Forum. Ecologists have estimated that more than a billion animals have died around the country- a figure which excludes fish, frogs, bats and insects. Many threatened species have lost their habitat, or their lives and we are likely to see further extinctions . Around 8,000 koalas from the mid-north coast of New South Wales are thought to have perished as some one third of their habitat has been destroyed. The prospect of koalas becoming extinct in that state is frighteningly realistic. There are also fires in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia- the whole country is reeling under a haze of smoke and our capital cities

are experiencing some of the worst air quality in the world. Emissions from these bushfires are enormous and need to be accounted for when carbon budgets and targets are discussed.

Despite this, State governments are planning to log more forests, seemingly more concerned about the jobs of forestry workers than the ecological disaster- I wonder where they think our oxygen and water are going to come from once all the trees are gone? In Victoria, the Andrews government quietly released planned coupes on Christmas Eve. This was despite an ABC investigation in December revealing that VicForests has been logging illegally outside designated areas: [ABC News](#).

We have also seen the forestry industry circling like hawks pushing to 'salvage log' in burnt forests, a move which ecologists say delays forest regeneration by many decades.

Included in the coupes are large swathes of land next to the popular Beeripmo hiking track in the western district, a place of cool gullies and tall forests which borders the Mt Buangor National Park. This area was recommended to become a new National Park by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council- final decision to be made on this by early February. [The Age](#)

This is also despite the loss of temperate rainforests in East Gippsland- forests which are irreplaceable. Now is the time for communities dependent on the logging industry to be supported by government to transition into other industries, jobs that look after natural places.

Internationally, scientists have estimated now how many and where to [plant trees](#) to draw down CO2 to help address the climate crisis. Around 0.9 billion hectares (2.2 billion acres) of land worldwide would be suitable for reforestation, which could ultimately capture two thirds of human-made carbon emissions. We need governments to recognise the value of trees and forests and to protect our remaining old growth and native forests at the same time as they begin reforestation of burnt areas. Given Victoria's Mountain Ash forests are the most carbon dense in the world, it is madness to log them.

Finally, [World Wetlands Day](#) was on February 2nd- a time to learn about wetland biodiversity and reversing its loss. Wetland biodiversity matters because they remove pollutants, shield coastlines from storms, store 30% of land-based carbon, enable 40% of life to thrive, absorb and store water, provide a living for 1 billion people, enable our food supply, and provide a place for recreation and tourism. Sadly, wetlands are ["disappearing three times faster than forests"](#)

If you need to find solace in these trying times, don't forget that time spent in a natural place- your garden, the local park or the beach- can help reduce feelings of stress and elevate mood. DEA are holding events in nature this year, including forest bathing in Tasmania and forays into forests into Victoria

PS. Check out this revolutionary [living plant](#) for your office or home- I hope this makes you smile!

Dimity Williams: [dimitywilliams@bigpond.com](mailto:dimitywilliams@bigpond.com)

## **Coal, Oil and Gas**

At the recent Press Club lunch PM Morrison, while claiming credit for renewable energy and claiming, again, that Australia would meet and beat its Paris targets, said that "We have to get the gas out from under our feet". This extraordinary boosting of the oil and gas industry flies in the face of everything that science is telling us, as explained in this article by Professor David Shearman. [The New Daily](#)

New Acland Coal is seeking to expand its operations on prime agricultural land against the wishes of the local Darling Downs community. DEA has long fought against this environmentally destructive mine which has tacit approval of both major parties, as David Shearman explains in this article in [Pearls and Irritations](#)

Professor Ross Garnaut who, in his report to government over a decade ago warned of the expanding bushfire risk which has now come to pass, offers an alternative vision for Australia to the fossil fuel obsessed view of politicians on both sides. His latest book Superpower suggests a pathway in energy, transport and agriculture which could turn Australia into an energy giant exporting green energy to Asia and leading to net zero emissions of carbon. [The Guardian](#)

### **Media Report - DEA in the news**

**Glencore's proposed Glendell mine expansion until 2044 has galvanised global warming activists,** [Western Magazine](#), 30 January News story that quotes Dr John Van Der Kallen. Also appeared in [Newcastle Herald](#).

**Bushfire Smoke:** Tara Ali, health writer for New Idea spoke with Dr Arnagretta Hunter about bushfire smoke on 30 January.

**Just a month after bushfire tore through parts of the NSW's Blue Mountains, recovery for many residents and businesses is well underway.** Featured on [SBS](#), 29 January. News article that

quotes Dr Robert Llewellyn-Jones. Also featured on [SBS Facebook and Instagram](#)

**Workers responding collectively to bushfire pollution.** [3CR radio](#), Earth Matters, 26 January. Interview with Dr Katherine Barraclough as part of a discussion

**Smoke in the city: The dire health implications.** [GreenLeft](#), 24 January. Quotes Dr Katherine Barraclough

**Dr Dimity Williams** was interviewed about bushfire smoke and health by the Latrobe Valley Express. Jan 21. Article unavailable.

**As the Liberals rest on their climate laurels, Labor must bite the coal bullet.** [New Daily](#) 20 January. Oped by Dr David Shearman

**The warming planet is already killing people, so health policy must catch up.** [Australian Financial Review](#) news story and [Sydney Morning Herald](#) oped. In a major speech by Shadow Health Minister Chris Bowen (which also ran as an oped), he cites DEA as an authority alongside the AMA.

**Doctor explains the impact the fires have had on our health,** [Neos Kosmos](#), 17 January. News article that quotes A/Prof Vicki Kotsirilos AM.

**Bushfires expose weaknesses in Australia's health system,** [The Lancet](#), 18 January. Feature story that quotes Dr Eugenie Kayak (also Dr Arnagretta Hunter in an independent capacity) How are homeless people in Australia affected by the bushfires

**Down Under?** [The Big Issue](#), 16 January. Quotes Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**The effects of bushfire smoke.** 95.5FM KROCK (Geelong, Vic). 16 January. Dr Hayden Burch spoke.

**The lethal threat from cancerous particles in the soil scorched by bushfires.** Channel 10, January 16. Dr Beau Frigault interviewed. Link unavailable

**Victoria's chief health officer calls for Australian Open air quality policy,** [The Age](#), 15 January. News article quotes Dr Katherine Barraclough

**Smoke and mirrors: Health and the impact of climate change in Australia** [Policy Forum](#), 15 January. Oped by Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**Big Issue Australia vendors on the bushfires ravaging their country,** [International Network of Street Papers](#)(INSP). 14 January. Quotes Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**Smoke Pollution and Health.** [ABC 774](#), 14 January. Dr Katherine Barraclough on smoke pollution and health.

**Tradies urged to down tools, fire alarms set off as smoke haze engulfs city**[Herald Sun](#), 14 January. News article quotes Dr Katherine Barraclough

**Australian doctor on 'nerve-wracking' wildfires and climate crisis: 'You can taste it and I make sure my children stay indoors',** [iNews](#), (UK) 14 January First person story by Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**The dangers of bushfire smoke unmasked,** [PR Wire](#)13 January. Quotes Dr Katherine Barraclough

**'Australia fires are impacting physical, mental health'**  
[Israel national News](#)14 January. Quotes Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**We must be more conscious of coal, and our future,**  
[Canberra Times](#), 12 January. Oped by journalist Joanne McCarthy who mentions DEA.

**Burning anxiety: The new normal isn't just the fire, it's the fear**  
[New Daily](#), 11 January. Feature article that quotes Dr Robert Llewellyn-Jones and Dr Richard Yin

**Doctor Says Australia Fires Are Impacting Physical, Mental Health,** [WBUR-FM](#), 9 January. WBUR-FM is a public radio station located in Boston, Massachusetts, owned by Boston University. WBUR is the largest of three NPR member stations. Based on an Interview with Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**Bushfires and related smoke.** 2GB 10 January, Dr Jane Morgan interviewed. No link available.

**Impact of bushfire smoke of health, and how climate change is creating health problems for Victorians.** ABC Central Victoria, 10 January Interview with Dr Katherine Barraclough. No Link available.

**As Australia burns, where is our plan?** [AusDoc](#), 9 January Oped by Dr Richard Yin

**When our love of place gets swallowed by bushfires,**  
[Open Forum](#), 9 January Oped by Dr Dimity Williams

## **Q & A session with the Greens Senator Cate Faehrmann**

[NSW Parliament House via Facebook](#), 9 January. Dr Lai Heng Foong interviewed.

**Ross Garnaut's climate change prediction is coming true and it's going to cost Australia billions, experts warn**, [ABC Local](#), 8

January. Quotes Dr John Iser

**Dear Albo, it's up to you to pave Australia's future amid climate change**, [The Canberra Times](#), 6 January. Oped by Dr David Shearman

**Falling ash, skies of blood – and now Australia's anger smoulders**, [The Guardian](#), 5 January. Quotes Dr Liz Bashford

**Incendies en Australie : «Notre écosystème s'effondre»** - [Libération](#) 4 January Quotes from Arnagretta Hunter

### **Missed media**

**Hot and bothered: heat affects all of us, but older people face the highest health risks.** The Conversation, 31 December. Oped by Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**Live interview with Rod Henshaw 2CC** , 17 December 2019 featuring Dr Arnagretta Hunter

**Asthma worse in heat**, Leader Newspapers, 9 December 2019. Dr Karen Kiang was interviewed by the Leader newspapers.

The quotes were published across 22 newspapers across Melbourne in the week beginning 9 Dec 2019.

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