

[[Date]]

DEA JULY NEWSLETTER



#TURNOFFTHEGAS

Turn Off The Gas!

With the government seemingly intend on a "gas led" economic recovery (please read below), DEA has kickstarted its [#TurnOffTheGas](#) campaign with a short punchy video ending with a direct simple appeal to write to Scott Morrison and your local MP via [#TurnOffTheGas](#)

The message is clear. Gas is hazardous to your health, its fugitive emissions further fuelling our climate disasters with the mining process threatening environment and health.

This video has been highly successful with over 27000 views and still being shared widely. But we still need many more members to sign up to the do-gooder petition. There is also a [FAQ resource](#)

Please sign and support our clear and direct message.

Our collective voices matter more than ever. Let's ensure this powerful message is heard by our policy makers.

Sign it, share it, send it!

A big thanks to Graeme McLeay and Ingo Weber (and many others) for all their work on this initiative and please read their recent article in [Independent Australia](#).

Annual Appeal 2020 Thank You!

A wonderful effort by our members and supporters has seen us exceed our Annual Appeal target of **\$50,000**. An amazing total of **\$66,000** was raised between the launch of the appeal on Tuesday 28 April 2020 and Tuesday 30 June 2020.

Biodiversity webinar - Professor Corey Bradshaw



Professor Corey Bradshaw, the Matthew Flinders Fellow in Global Ecology at Flinders University, presented a webinar for DEA on May 24. Professor Bradshaw discussed global biodiversity loss, particularly the degradation of ecosystem services which are essential for human health and wellbeing. Thank you to Professor Bradshaw and also to DEA Board member Graeme McLeay who organised the webinar, which is now available to watch on the [DEA website](#).

Podcast Launch

DEA is excited to launch our podcast! Hosted by Dr Karin English and Dr Kaiya Ferguson, it is a regular 30 minute-listen on topical planetary health issues and what's been happening within DEA. Available on most podcast platforms. Featuring interviews and snippets from the monthly newsletter, check out the first podcast below on the relationship between COVID-19 and air pollution, and the DEA organisational review.

[DEA Podcast Episode One](#)



More on HEALTH and ENERGY

The natural gas industry has emerged as a major concern for DEA as more and more evidence accumulates that gas extraction and use are locally polluting as well as damaging to the climate.

Background

Last October the Energy Minister Angus Taylor called for the "*Report of the Expert Panel Examining Additional Sources of Low Cost Abatement*", chaired by oil and gas industry expert Grant King. This report fails to address the urgency of climate change and has no plan to achieve emission reduction targets commensurate with the Paris Agreement. It advocates a costly and largely discredited technology of carbon capture and storage.

In his first Press Club meeting early this year the Prime Minister said "we must get the gas out from under our feet". Having listened to medical experts in managing the pandemic, the PM appointed the National COVID19 Coordination Committee to manage the recovery plans. This committee is chaired by, and dominated by, people with direct links to the gas industry.

It now seems clear that the government will proceed to underwrite gas projects in the electricity sector and heavily subsidise gas exploration. The reasoning behind this government policy is that gas is a transitional fuel, and when exported, gas will displace more polluting coal. DEA has long argued that gas is not a transitional fuel and is the cause of local health concerns near gas wells. [More and more evidence has accumulated to support that view.](#)

DEA will continue to campaign for more renewable energy and argue the case against gas, including many more jobs and far greater health benefits from the renewable sector.

A letter has been sent to the Chief Scientist with queries about gas. DEA was also able to obtain 2 proxy votes at the AGM of Santos through Market Forces where we were able to put [questions to the executive.](#)

Narrabri

Santos' Coal Seam Gas proposal is now facing its last hurdle in the NSW Independent Planning Commission. The NSW Government is under pressure from the federal government to approve gas extraction – there is a \$2 billion dollar funding deal tied to gas. The project has been very divisive for Narrabri with a majority of locals opposed. DEA's John Van Der

Kallen and others are preparing a Supplementary Submission on CSG in Narrabri to the IPC. Individuals can also [submit](#)

All who are interested in gas issues should follow [Tim Forcey](#).

Transport

The SA Government has just backflipped on plans to remove almost a thousand public bus routes from the system following a public outcry. All of the criticism was based on the social harm in reduced availability of buses for the elderly and disadvantaged. Issues of harm to air quality and emissions reduction were not raised by media. A group from DEA will meet with the SA Transport Minister's advisor on July 2nd.

Renewable Energy

Australian Parents for Climate Action is starting a campaign to put solar on every school roof in Australia. DEA will be in touch with them.

If interested in energy issues, coal oil and gas, transport, housing, renewable energy, energy efficiency, please contact Kylie at admin@dea.org.au There will be a Zoom meeting in early July.

DIVESTMENT

While our national government continues to undermine action on climate change, institutional investors and the [financial sector are moving](#) with increasing speed towards the reality of a low carbon future. In January \$6.9tn asset manager Blackrock [announced an exit](#) from coal citing climate risks.

Closer to home this week, health super fund [HESTA announced](#) it had completed divestment from thermal coal after years of advocacy by its members, DEA and especially by [Healthy Futures](#). We were also delighted to read [First State Super](#) Chief Investment Officer comment that they are not looking to expand investments in gas. Damian Graham said "We are less focused on gas, to be honest... renewables are something we are focused on". DEA has had a series of meetings with FSS over the last year and have emphasised our concerns regarding gas.

Your DEA Divestment Special Interest Group also met with the climate and sustainability executive at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia last month and supplied them with ample evidence which they will use internally to continue to move the bank away from fossil fuels. More meetings are planned. In addition, we have also been invited by the [Munderoo Foundation](#) (impact-focused philanthropy) to contribute to their [disaster resilience work](#) especially as it relates to mitigation of climate risk and climate health impacts.

Divestment Checklist:

- How clean is my bank? Visit the [comparison table](#)
- Am I in a super fund with a fossil free socially responsible fund and if so have I selected it?
- Have I visited the [Market Forces](#) website to participate in their initiatives and review their information?

If you are interested in divestment and would like to join our Special Interest Group nationally then please let us know! Helen Redmond, convenor, drhelenfr@gmail.com

BIODIVERSITY

Meeting with Sussan Ley - the Federal Minister for the Environment (Agriculture, Water and the Environment)

In early June several members of our committee, along with a representative from the Climate And Health Alliance, met via teleconference with Federal Environment Minister, Sussan Ley. The background to our meeting was the great media coverage we received from our [Open Letter](#) to her a few weeks prior.

During the meeting we emphasised the large number of health professionals we represented, all of whom were deeply concerned by the inadequacy of Australia's national nature laws (the EBC Act) and the dire state of Australia's biodiversity. We challenged her on the inherent conflict of interest embodied by Regional Forest Agreements where State logging bodies are in charge of checking for threatened species in areas they wish to log, on the flawed offset system and the failure of current laws to consider multiple projects impacting on the one ecosystem like the Great Barrier Reef or major river systems.

When Minister Ley blamed delays in the development of recovery plans for threatened species on slow scientists we highlighted the inadequate financial support provided to universities and researchers by her government. We reaffirmed our call for a national, independent EPA with public health expertise and for both climate and water triggers to be incorporated into the Act if new laws outlined by the Australian Panel of Experts on Environmental Law were not adopted.

Essentially, whilst the Minister acknowledged the link between health and the natural environment, she appears to want to make it clearer/simpler for developers. The Minister did raise one example of a refusal to a project she had just made- that of a wind farm in south eastern NSW in order to protect koala and greater glider habitat. We wonder how many coal/gas projects have been refused for the same reasons.

Here's hoping the Minister noticed a strong opinion piece in the [Canberra Times](#) the following morning by DEA and CAHA on the issue.

Logging and bushfires

The science is in, [logging makes forests more flammable](#).

A good news story- how landscape restoration provides positive social and wellbeing benefits

This farming community has performed its own backyard blitz, pitching in together to transform an unsightly stormwater drain on the edge of town into a beautiful wetland that's attracting more than just birdlife. [Read the full story](#)

Below something beautiful to say thank you for supporting DEA



New South Wales

Narrabri Coal Seam Gas Project

The Narrabri Coal Seam Gas project was unfortunately approved by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment this month. This comes in the wake of an unsuccessful vote in state parliament to place a moratorium on gas projects. DEA NSW remain staunchly opposed to the project due to the deleterious health effects and its inefficiency as a so-called “transition fuel” from coal. The project is now before the Independent Planning Commission for a final round of public hearings and submissions. DEA NSW will be applying to speak to the IPC arguing against the project on health grounds.

[Find more information here](#)

New National Park

Some good news out of NSW this week, with [the announcement of a new national park](#) in far north-west NSW. The purchase by the NSW government is the state’s largest purchase of land for the purpose of conservation. The area is of great significance, containing 27 threatened species including the grey grasswren. In the interests of ensuring a healthy planet, DEA NSW supports the preservation of wilderness areas and protection of the land from development or fossil fuel projects.

Eden-Monaro Byelection

The federal electorate of Eden-Monaro go to the polls on 4th July to elect a new member for the House of Representatives. This area takes in several communities that were particularly affected by the bushfire crisis over the summer. There now appears to be a lived sense in the community that the effects of climate change, including those on health, are here and now. There is also a strong sentiment that the community has been let down by the government on environmental issues including the bushfires and the recovery process as well as the ongoing drought. DEA NSW have contacted candidates of major parties to highlight the importance of health and the environment and will be following the outcome of the election closely.

South Australia

The state committee has continued to meet via Zoom and progress our important agenda despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. We are grateful to Katherine Economides (from the RACP SA/NT office) who has facilitated our virtual meetings. Updates from SA include:

SA Greening Hospitals and Healthcare special interest group

We all know that the healthcare sector produces an enormous amount of waste which is increasing further in the wake of COVID-19 with more disposable PPE and single-use items being used.

It has been estimated that 8% of the United States total CO2 emissions comes from the health care sector and that the English NHS is responsible for over 3% of England's total CO2 emissions. The amount of waste going into landfill has not been adequately quantified. However, overall there is a lack of interest, support and accountability from the healthcare sector itself.

In SA, sustainability initiatives have been initiated and led by dedicated individuals in their workplaces:

1. At Flinders Medical Centre, a recycling project was commenced by a passionate anaesthetic nurse in 2017. He has now been joined by others in the anaesthetic department and projects have been rolled out to other hospital departments. Since its inception, more than 3.2 tonnes of PVC have been recycled and converted into hoses and children's play equipment, and more than 1.5 Olympic-sized swimming pools worth of compressed plastics have been diverted from landfill and used as Processed Engineered Fuel Coal substitute.
2. At South Coast District Hospital in Victor Harbour, a dedicated GP has been instrumental in introducing reducing and recycling initiatives that have taken 2 years of time and effort to achieve.
3. Other metropolitan hospitals, both public and private, have joined the Baxter PVC recycling program. These are just a few of the many initiatives that have been started by individuals. There are many others that we often do not hear about.

Politician engagement

The DEA SA committee continues to reach out to state and federal MPs seeking engagement and support for environmental issues. A focus is, of course, the effects of COVID-19; we are particularly concerned that gas developments are being promoted as a central component of the economic recovery, when the need for greening the economy remains critical.

SA Student activities

The DEA team at The University of Adelaide have partnered with another

student society (Insight Code Green) to create eco in iso (ideas for eco-friendly activities at home) and green linings (positive environmental stories from around the world) social media

posts to encourage student engagement. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/DEAstudentsSA/> to see their work.

DEA student members also participated in the School Strike 4 Climate online rally on May 15, calling for a healthier, fairer future that leaves no one behind.

Education

Education of SA secondary school students, medical students and GPs is the current focus, with the group looking for opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the links between the environment and human health. Activities include the development of a climate and health learning module for GPs and a virtual climate and health panel event for medical students, similar to that run at Flinders University in the past.

Business and Divestment

The SA group continues to advocate for divestment from fossil fuels, with a focus on our local universities and Super SA which is the mandatory superannuation provider for SA Government employees.

Energy and Health

Gas developments remain a significant concern as we face the climate emergency. SA DEA is working closely with other advocates to promote a rapid shift to renewable energy without increasing gas extraction and use. Another focus is on transport policy. We have an appointment to see State Transport Minister Knoll's advisor on Thursday July 2nd. The minister declined to see us himself.

There is also a "frequently asked questions" about gas now on the website. The links to the video and an oped from me and Ingo went up on Twitter on Friday 26th.

Nutrition and Farming

An information leaflet which outlines the health and environmental benefits of moving away from meat-based diets is in production and will be distributed to the SA community via GP surgeries once complete. Alphonse is liaising with the national SIG on this. Alphonse and his team have done a great job in preparing the pamphlet which advocates a diet that is good for us, good for the climate and good for the planet.

Interested? We are the Weather: saving the planet begins at breakfast by Jonathon Safran Foer is a great place to start.

Looking ahead in SA

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of just how closely the environment and human health and wellbeing are entwined. The DEA SA committee continues to advocate for a rapid and just response to the climate emergency to support health for all. We are considering COVID-19 and its impacts in all our work to ensure it remains relevant and adapted to rapidly shifting priorities.

We are also looking forward to hosting a social event as COVID-19 restrictions ease - stay tuned for more information!

Victoria

John Iser, Laura Beaton and Ken Winkel met this month with Leader of the Greens, Adam Bandt. A very fruitful two-way exchange was had around a range of issues including Zali's Steggall's Climate Change Bill, Greens/Labor consensus, the EPBC Act review, the issue of gas in Australia, and messaging about the climate crisis.

Vic DEA has also been busy with presentations:

- Karen Kiang and Katherine Barraclough spoke at the Royal Children's Hospital Global Health Forum on climate change and children's health and the links between zoonoses and environmental health, respectively.
- Katherine Barraclough spoke at a Lighter Footprints event with Sue Dwyer from Climate for Change on MP engagement.
- Katherine Barraclough spoke to Bendigo Health about how being part of an organisation like DEA part of a group working towards a goal can be beneficial for health and wellbeing.

Vic DEA is also very pleased by the recent announcement that Professor Kate Auty will assume the role of chair of the Victorian EPA from July 1 for a five-year period. Her previous roles include Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability and ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. She is a strong personality and advocate for the environment, and we are confident that with her expertise, insights and skills, she will ensure strong leadership and governance of the EPA during a period where it is undergoing major transition and major reform.

Events

The [Australian Public Health Conference 2020](#), convened by the Public Health Association of Australia, will be held online as a virtual Conference from Monday 19 to Friday 30 October 2020.

The [call for abstracts](#) is closes Sunday July 5, 2020 and abstract submissions are invited for long oral, rapid fire and e-poster presentations.

The theme for the virtual Australian Public Health Conference 2020 is: '**Public Health action: Response to bushfires, climate and coronavirus**'.

Membership Category Update reminder

DEA's members make DEA who we are – so please do your best at recruiting! As of 1 July you will notice some changes to our current membership structure to help stream-line our accounting processes and hopefully make payment easier for you.

Joining DEA can continue to consist of a tax deductible donation that best suits your circumstances.* Below are some of the donating options that will be available to members as of 1 July 2020, which can be paid monthly or annually.

Platinum Wollemi Pine - \$1200 and over (\$100 per month)

Gold Wattle - \$540 (\$45 per month)

Silver Jarrah - \$360 (\$30 per month)

Bronze Banksia- \$180 (\$15 per month)

Low income - \$75

(*Note that the first \$50 is a non tax deductible membership fee)

Student members are free and retired members can choose from any of the categories above.

As always, if you are experiencing financial hardship we encourage you to contact us to discuss other options at admin@dea.org.au

The option for members to pay monthly also helps DEA to better predict our income over the year enabling us to plan expenditure accordingly.

Our current membership categories will be phased out as our members renew their memberships in the 20/21 financial year.

Thank you once again!

A big thank you once again to all our members for donating so generously to our Annual Appeal, the enormous amount of work and activities over the last month (including media listed below) and of course all the wonderful contributions to this newsletter.

DEA in the news

[Climate change is the next health crisis we face](#)

Canberra Times, 29 June, Oped by Dr Beau Frigault

[The madness of a gas-led recovery and what you can do about it](#)

Independent Australia, 26 June, Oped co-authored by Drs Graeme McLeay and Ingo Weber

[Peninsula group joins national push to protect environment](#)

Peninsula News, 22 June, News story which mentions Dr Katherine Barraclough as spokesperson for DEA's recent open letter to Environment Minister Sussan Ley.

[Save money and the planet](#)

Hills to Hawkesbury Community News, 22 June, News story featuring Dr Kim Loo on the benefits of clean energy for the planet and the hip pocket.

[COVID-19 and beyond: impact of air pollution](#)

MJA Insight +15 June, Oped by A/Prof Vicki Kotsirilos AM

[What some health leaders are hoping might emerge from pandemic disruption](#)

Croakey, 15 June, News story that quotes Dr Richard Yin.

[NSW parliamentary inquiry into air quality hears asthma sufferers, wider community still affected by bushfire smoke](#)

Port Macquarie News, 12 June, News story with Dr Trudi Beck as DEA spokes.

[Now is not the time to weaken our environmental protections](#)

The Canberra Times, 10 June, Oped by A/Prof Katherine Barraclough and Fiona Armstrong (CAHA)

[Commenting on the story: SA public servants set to get freedom of super choice](#)

InDaily, 10 June, Letter to the Editor by Dr David Everett who urges the SA government to progress this initiative.

[The next global health pandemic could easily erupt in your backyard](#)

The Conversation, 2 June, Article references DEA's open letter to Environment Minister Sussan Ley

[The Climate Tide roars in, yet leaders fail to understand and act](#)

John Menadue- Pearls and Irritations, 11 June, Oped by Dr David Shearman and Dr Melissa Haswell

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Keep abreast of the latest DEA news and events, as well as health and environment stories, reports, studies and insights by connecting with us on Facebook, twitter and instagram!



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@doctorsfortheEnvironment



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