



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Public Health Association of Australia submission on the Australian Climate Change Authority Special Review on Australia's Climate Goals and Policies

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Introduction

The Public Health Association of Australia

The Public Health Association of Australia Incorporated (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia and works to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. The Association seeks better population health outcomes based on prevention, the social determinants of health and equity principles. PHAA is a national organisation comprising around 1900 individual members and representing over 40 professional groups.

The PHAA has Branches in every State and Territory and a wide range of Special Interest Groups. The Branches work with the National Office in providing policy advice, in organising seminars and public events and in mentoring public health professionals. This work is based on the agreed policies of the PHAA. Our Special Interest Groups provide specific expertise, peer review and professionalism in assisting the National Organisation to respond to issues and challenges as well as a close involvement in the development of policies. In addition to these groups the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health (ANZJPH) draws on individuals from within PHAA who provide editorial advice, and review and edit the Journal.

In recent years PHAA has further developed its role in advocacy to achieve the best possible health outcomes for the community, both through working with all levels of Government and agencies, and promoting key policies and advocacy goals through the media, public events and other means.

Vision for a healthy population

A healthy region, a healthy nation, healthy people: living in an equitable society underpinned by a well-functioning ecosystem and healthy environment, improving and promoting health for all.

Mission

As the leading national peak body for public health representation and advocacy, to drive better health outcomes through increased knowledge, better access and equity, evidence informed policy and effective population-based practice in public health.

Preamble

PHAA welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Australian Climate Change Authority Special Review on Australia's Climate Goals and Policies. The reduction of social and health inequities should be an over-arching goal of national policy and recognised as a key measure of our progress as a society. The Australian Government, in collaboration with the States/Territories, should outline a comprehensive national cross-government framework on reducing health inequities. All public health activities and related government policy should be directed towards reducing social and health inequity nationally and, where possible, internationally.

Health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and a key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions of society that underpin people's health. The health status of all people is impacted by the social, political, and environmental and economic determinants of health. This is particularly pertinent when considering issues such as carbon pricing where costs to society generally need to be internalised to the system while protecting the disadvantaged.

PHAA Responses to Special Review

The PHAA Ecology and Environment Special Interest Group (E&E SIG) on behalf of the PHAA thank the Climate Change Authority (CCA) for the opportunity to provide feedback and discussion on the draft report on Australia's climate policy options and have addressed the opening three questions in this submission.

The key point made in this submission is that the short and longer term, direct and indirect effects to wellbeing, including economic prosperity and health and the sustainable survival of our civilisation needs to be taken into account in any economic approach to inform Australia's climate mitigation goals and policies.

Q1 The Authority proposes assessing policies primarily on their cost effectiveness, environmental effectiveness and equity. Are these principles appropriate? Are there any other principles that should be applied, and if so why?

PHAA is supportive of the proposed principles however believes they could be expanded. Climate change and the need for emission reductions should be considered as an opportunity to transform Australian society to one that is more equitable, more environmentally sustainable, and safer, promotes greater diversity and is healthier. Limiting the principles to merely considering emissions risks losing opportunities to co-benefit promoting health and wellbeing. These include health benefits through reduced pollution, increased physical activity, improved diet, a more equitable sustainable environment and increased biodiversity.

Q2 What lessons can be learned from Australia and overseas on the effectiveness of mandatory carbon pricing, and its interaction with other climate policies?

PHAA supports carbon pricing as a key market mechanism to internalise the direct and indirect costs to society of carbon emissions and associated pollutants (heavy metals, other volatile organic substances) from the use of fossil fuels for stationary energy and transport. Carbon price as part of a broad suite of strategies drives behavioural and technological change in financial and other social systems. These strategies must be considered within the global and national framework in which carbon pricing is introduced, particularly any subsidisation and offsetting which have the potential to shape the overall outcomes of climate policies.

Q3 How does mandatory carbon pricing perform against the principles of cost effectiveness, environmental effectiveness and equity? Which type of pricing scheme is likely to be more effective, and why?

To ensure mandatory carbon pricing performs against the principles, deliberative democracy processes such as community forums and citizen juries provide an opportunity for all Australians to contribute their expertise and experience. While urgent action is necessary, engaging the Australian community in initial and on-going consultation is essential to building political capital to support acceptance and success.

PHAA has no specific expertise to offer in answering questions 4-17.

Conclusion

PHAA supports the pricing of carbon emissions as a component of a broad suite of policies to curb carbon emissions and protect the wellbeing, prosperity and health of current and future generations of Australians. A carbon price will help drive the behavioural and technological changes necessary to restructure our economy, and to support a healthy and environmental sustainability of generations to come.

The PHAA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information or have any queries in relation to this submission.



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