

# CAIRNS ACTION STATEMENT ON: CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



## **Preamble:**

We, the Rural General Practice/Family Medicine Workforce of the world, meeting in Cairns, Australia at the 14<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Rural Health Congress, 2017, propose a global initiative for the advancement of awareness, education, and skills development of all health professionals in preventing and adapting to the impacts of Climate Change.

We recognize the scientific evidence of the global warming of the planet and the rapid rate in which this process is occurring.

We note that the Lancet Commission on Climate Change concluded that climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2009).

We acknowledge that the impacts on the environment have direct impact on population health and the social determinants of health.

We acknowledge that these environmental impacts present a disproportionate risk to those vulnerable populations living in coastal, rural and remote areas, particularly in circumpolar and developing countries.

We acknowledge that these environmental impacts present a risk particularly to the health of the aged, children, women, indigenous peoples, those of low socioeconomic status.

We recognize the Paris Climate Agreement not only as an historic and potentially game-changing climate change agreement, but also an important public health agreement.

## **We challenge those in Education:**

To include curriculum in the identification of health risk factors from climate change for all health professional training programs;

To promote leadership among health professionals in increasing community, regional, national and global awareness of the specific health consequences of climate change and ways to mitigate and adapt to these;

To require demonstrated competency by graduates in the health consequences of climate change, including the critical appraisal and communication of information;

To require curriculum and competency in the environmental impacts of health care systems, and thoughtful decision making that makes the best use of resources in patient-centered care.

## **We challenge Health Policy Makers of the World:**

To promote policies that utilize telemedicine, team-based care and other low energy options for delivery of care across distance.

To join international efforts and participate actively in policy development that promotes clean, safe, affordable and renewable energy with reduction of carbon emissions;

To promote agricultural reform and system development that is sustainable, nutritionally dense and utilizes low environmental impact guidelines;

To develop Climate Change Readiness Strategies to help build community resilience and prepare for the changing burdens of disease resulting from climate change.

**We Challenge the General Practice/Family Medicine Workforce of the World:**

To consider environmental impacts of their day to day practices and develop best practices appropriate to their practice settings that optimize environmental sustainability;

To offer regular education and leadership to their patients and community on Climate Change Impacts and how to build community resilience to the climate change effects through Climate Change Readiness strategies;

To follow the World Medical Association, the Rockefeller Foundation and hundreds of other organisations in a commitment to remove individual, organizational and institutional investments from industries whose main business involves the production of carbon emissions, such as the companies listed in the Carbon Underground 200 Companies List.

**We challenge the Medical Students and Junior Doctors of the World:**

To take on leadership roles in addressing action on climate change.

**We Challenge the Health Delivery Systems of the world:**

To consider the environmental impacts equally with the financial and cost/benefit analysis when making decisions regarding purchases of equipment, institutional policies and procedures and use of high energy equipment;

To develop systems of assessing, reporting and rating energy efficiency with specific health delivery system activities.

**We Challenge the Pharmaceutical and Medical Goods Industry**

To consider the environmental impact of their goods and products in their marketing, manufacturing and product distribution activities.

**We challenge the Governmental decision-makers of the World:**

To work together to commit to the Paris Agreement and participate effectively in further climate negotiations;

To implement policies that allow sufficient emissions reductions at the fastest possible rate;

To promote development and investment in renewable energy sources and a transition from fossil fuels;

To support developing countries in accessing clean, safe, renewable and affordable energy for all;

To support developing countries to adapt and strengthen resilience to minimize the impacts of climate change;

To advocate for active transport systems and sustainable energy use vehicles;

To optimize opportunities for recycling, re-using, and re-purposing materials, fuels, and other resources;

To promote local-source food options that are sustainable, nutritionally dense and utilize low environmental impact guidelines.