

## JOINT STATEMENT

# The air pollution in NSW is a public health emergency

Smoke from bushfires has produced air pollution of up to 11 times the base 'hazardous' level in parts of Sydney and New South Wales. High levels of air pollution are expected to continue.

**There is no safe level of air pollution.** The higher the level of pollution, the more hazardous the risks to health. Bushfire smoke is particularly hazardous because of the high levels of tiny particles (PM2.5).

Babies, young children and those who are elderly or already experience chronic respiratory or cardiovascular disease are at higher risk, as are the socially and economically marginalised who may not have access to air conditioning or air purifiers.

Air pollution is linked to diseases throughout life: including premature births, low birth weight babies, impaired lung development in children, asthma, heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung cancer.

The levels of air pollution in NSW in recent weeks, and in the immediate future, remain hazardous to people's health.

### **This is a public health emergency**

Governments have a responsibility to protect the people they represent.

Both the Federal and State Government of NSW must prioritise action to help reduce the risks to people's health arising from hazardous air pollution from the bushfires that continue to burn relentlessly across the state.

**We call on Prime Minister Scott Morrison and NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian to demonstrate the leadership this public health emergency demands, and to implement measures to help alleviate the health and climate crisis.**

Authorities are encouraging people in affected areas to avoid exercise and stay indoors with windows and doors closed and, if they have medication for respiratory conditions, to use their medications as directed.

In accordance with advice from the NSW Department of Health, if you are particularly susceptible to bushfire smoke, consider staying with a friend or relative whose house has clean indoor air or leaving the area for a cleaner environment.

### **Protecting health requires climate action**

Climate change is worsening many extreme weather events such as serious bushfire weather, which is having devastating impacts on human health.

The air pollution events resulting from bushfires will become more and more frequent and are a result of climate change. Our governments must act quickly to rapidly and deeply reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which we know are driving climate change.

### **This moment calls for political leadership**

All of our political leaders must acknowledge the health and environmental emergency of climate change, and step up and commit to urgent climate action by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with what the science demands.

**In addition to responding to this public health emergency, we call on Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Premier Gladys Berejiklian to lead action on climate change to protect our health.**

This must include a multi-portfolio response involving Federal and State governments and the development of a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being. This will ensure a nationally coordinated approach to tackling the worsening health impacts of climate change, and that health service planning includes climate change preparedness to respond to the increasing demand for health services from extreme weather events, such as bushfires and heatwaves.

**This joint statement is signed by:**

