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We can no longer ignore the link between climate change and mental health

Mental Health Australia is today calling on both major parties and all candidates in the upcoming Federal Election to acknowledge and act on climate change.

Mental Health Australia CEO Dr Leanne Beagley says climate change poses a clear and consistent threat to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians, and the communities in which we live.

“We know that climate change will impact our mental health because more extreme weather events and natural disasters can have a psychological toll on stress, anxiety and more, especially over prolonged periods,” said Dr Beagley.

“We also know that the lack of decisive action on climate change from government leads to further anxiety and insecurity, especially for young Australians who are already dealing with increases in the cost of living and pressures on employment and housing affordability.”

“As a nation we witness time and again the deep resilience, adaptability, strength, and practical optimism of human beings in the face of overwhelming personal and collective challenges.”

“We can and must bring all these traits and resources to bear in addressing the health threats of climate change. And despite the complex challenges Australia and the world must face to address climate change, there remains hope for both individuals and communities.”

Mental Health Australia is advocating for climate change policy and action in recognition of due to the strong link between climate change and inaction and ongoing and potential mental ill-health. The next three years are vital if we are to prevent and change these outcomes.

“For many people the threat and complexity of climate change and its effects can lead to despair and hopelessness. However there is hope, and opportunity, if we act now,” said Dr Beagley.

“All levels of government must develop better responses to climate change and increasing natural disasters that are a consequence of inaction, by developing national response coordination plans and working with affected communities.

“In addition, governments, mental health service providers, researchers, consumers, and carers must take the impact of climate change into account when designing mental health policy, programs, and services, and this is especially important when it comes to trauma informed care and service provision.”

“Climate change is an ongoing issue that will impact us all over the coming years, and yet another issue in this year’s Federal Election campaign that will impact our ongoing mental health.”

Mental Health Australia is encouraging all Australians to vote with mental health in mind at this election. What does it mean to vote with mental health in mind? It means to vote knowing that every issue, every announcement, every debate, every election promise made, has the potential to impact our mental health, and our mental health system.

To see how climate change impacts our mental health or to find out more go to <https://mhaustralia.org/2022-election-vote-mental-health-mind>

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