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Call for clean energy by 2030 to protect health

As healthcare workers and health organisations, and in accordance with recommendations by the World Health Organization, we call on federal, state and territory governments and all energy companies to save lives from air pollution and the impacts of climate change by replacing coal with renewable energy this decade.

Air pollution from burning fossil fuels causes heart attacks, strokes, lung cancers and other lung diseases, and can particularly harm pregnant people, children and people with pre-existing conditions [1,2]. It is now recognised as one of the world's leading causes of morbidity and mortality, and in Australia has been estimated to cause 1451 premature deaths and 24881 years of life lost per year [3].

Coal-burning power stations are one of the most significant sources of pollution in major cities. [4]. In Sydney coal-burning power stations contribute to about as much fine particulate pollution as vehicles, particularly when temperatures are elevated [5], and also to the formation of dangerous smog. [6]

Pollution from Australian coal-burning power stations was recently estimated to kill 785 people every year, as well as causing 14,434 instances of children experiencing asthma symptoms and 845 babies to be born with low birth weight, which can have lifelong adverse health consequences [7], leading to around \$640m-\$1.4bn in health costs per year[8].

Coal-burning power stations are also Australia's biggest domestic contributor to climate change, accounting for over a quarter of our national emissions[9]. Average temperatures in Australia have risen by 1.4 degrees in the last century [10]. Over the 2019-20 summer, unprecedented bushfires directly killed 33 Australians, destroyed over 3,000 homes [11], and killed an estimated 417 further Australians through the toxic effects of the smoke [12]. Climate change is projected to impact on the physical and mental health of many more Australians by increasing the frequency and severity of bushfires, droughts and heatwaves, as well as increasing risk of allergic and infectious diseases [13].

In order to protect Australians from the health impacts of both air pollution and climate change, and in accordance with recommendations by the World Health Organization, we call on all energy companies and all levels of government to commit to replacing coal with renewable energy by

2030. Decision-makers must ensure that the benefits of renewable energy can be shared by all and that a clear plan is in place to support communities affected by the transition.

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