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## Health Professionals Call for Action on Climate Change and Health

**New Zealanders' health could be improved, and inequalities reduced, through action to address climate change.**

**As New Zealand health professional organisations we call for a rapid, whole-of-society transition to a low greenhouse gas-emitting nation, designed to make the most of opportunities for improving health and creating a fairer society.**

Health professional groups agree that human-caused climate change is an increasingly serious and urgent threat to health and health equity in New Zealand and worldwide. In contrast, rapid and effective action on climate change in New Zealand represents an important opportunity to improve health, by avoiding negative health impacts and by realising significant health and equity gains from well-designed climate policies.

**Globally:** Climate change is already contributing to global disease, disability and premature death – most seriously affecting people in poor countries, and the poorest within all countries.

**Health threats for New Zealand include:** illness and injury caused by high temperatures and other extreme weather events; biologically-mediated impacts such as changing patterns of infectious disease and rises in food prices impacting nutrition; and socially-mediated impacts such as loss of livelihoods, forced migration, economic vulnerability and risks of conflict.

**Those at highest health risk** from climate change in New Zealand include Māori, Pacific peoples, children, elderly and low income people.

**Action to address climate change in New Zealand could improve health and reduce leading causes of illness and death, with cost savings to the health sector and society:**

- More walking, cycling and public transport reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increases physical activity, and can reduce health-damaging air pollution and road traffic injuries.
- Healthy diets that include more plants and fewer animal products could reduce agricultural GHG emissions, while reducing cancer and heart disease.
- Improving housing (e.g. insulation) reduces illnesses associated with cold, damp home environments, and also cuts GHG emissions from home heating.

The full 'Call to Action on Climate Change and Health' is available at: [www.orataiao.org.nz](http://www.orataiao.org.nz)

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