



Australian Medical Association

Symposium Report

Disaster preparedness, response
and management

2025 CMAAO

Dr Danielle McMullen
President, Australian Medical Association
12-13 December 2025



Natural Disasters

Australia is not normally prone to **geological disasters**.

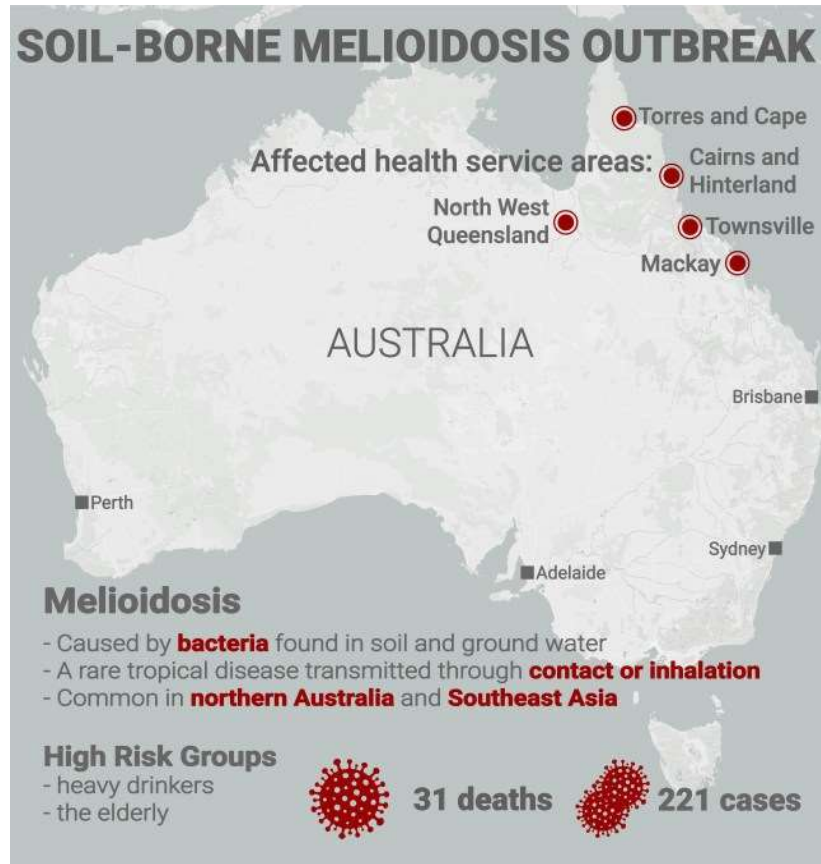
The 1989 Newcastle earthquake was an intraplate earthquake. Over 50,000 buildings and homes were damaged worth around \$4 billion. There are occasional small earthquakes but these rarely cause significant damage

However, **meteorological disasters** have wreaked havoc in Australia

- Bushfires
- Flooding
- Hailstorms
- Cyclones
- Droughts
- Storms
- Ocean surges

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of many natural hazards, such as heatwaves, droughts, floods and cyclones. This necessitates coordinated efforts to mitigate the risks and build more resilient societies.

Biological threats



Bird flu

Australia has successfully contained H5, however remains on alert for H7 due to migratory birds.

Swift action resulted in short-term impacts on egg supply.

Australia's Disaster Management

1. National Emergency Management Agency

Prepare:

- Offer grants to reduce risk
- National Emergency Stockpile
- National Messaging System

Respond:

- Emergency response plans
- Crisis management arrangements
- National coordination

Recover

- Temporary housing
- Loans

4. Australian CDC (COMING SOON)

The Australian CDC will be independent and operational in 2026.

The ACDC will have expertise in disease surveillance, One Health, Climate and Health and communicable diseases.

The ACDC will play a critical role in data collection and linkage of data sets.



2. AusMat

Australian Medical Assistance Team

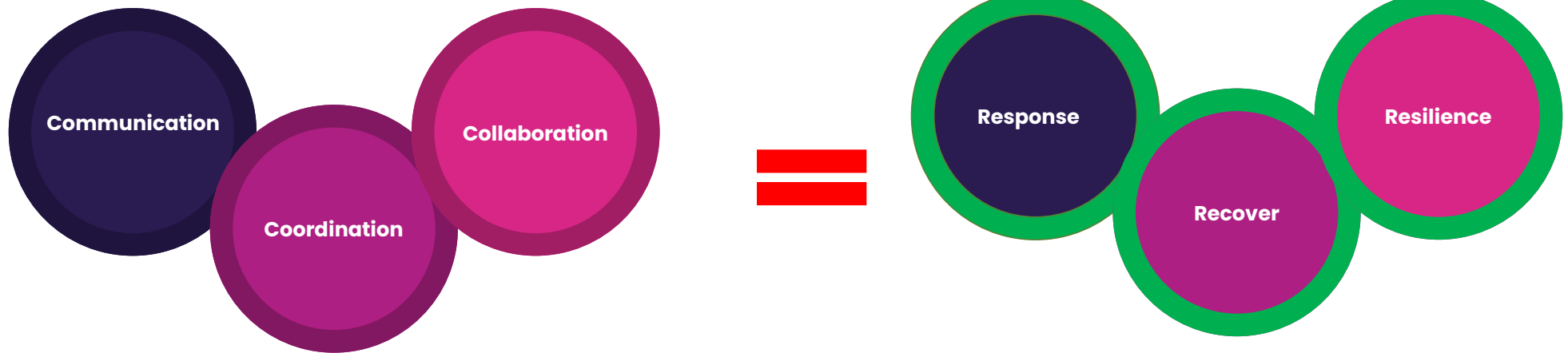
Multidisciplinary healthcare that is dispatched both nationally and internationally at the government's request.

The National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) prepares and coordinates personnel for international and domestic deployment.

3. Five Eyes

The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an Anglosphere intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

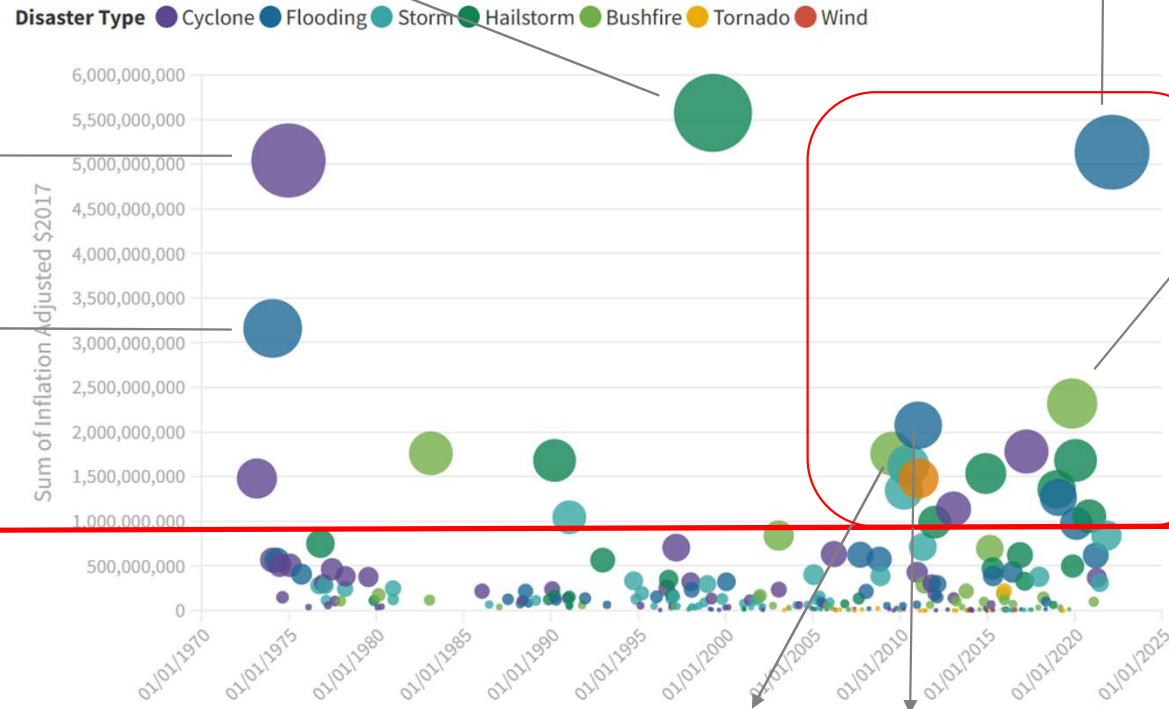
The three R's can only happen with the three C's



East Sydney Hailstorm, 1999
 >\$5.5bn insurance
 Crops destroyed
 40,000 cars damaged
 20,000 roofs damaged
 1 death

SE Qld/ Nth NSW Floods, 2022
 >\$5.9 bn insurance
 22 lives lost
 Entire towns inundated (Lismore)
 Tens of thousands displaced

Natural Disasters by Insurance Cost 1970 to 2022



Cyclone Tracey 1974, NT
 >\$5bn
 71 people died
 80% structures destroyed
 >35,000 homeless

Brisbane floods 1974
 >\$3.2 bn
 14 lives lost

2019/20 Bushfires (NSW, Vic, SA, Qld)
 >\$2.3 bn insurance
 >\$100 bn economy
 33 deaths from fires
 ~445 deaths from smoke inhalation
 24-25 million hectares destroyed (size of UK)
 3 bn animals destroyed

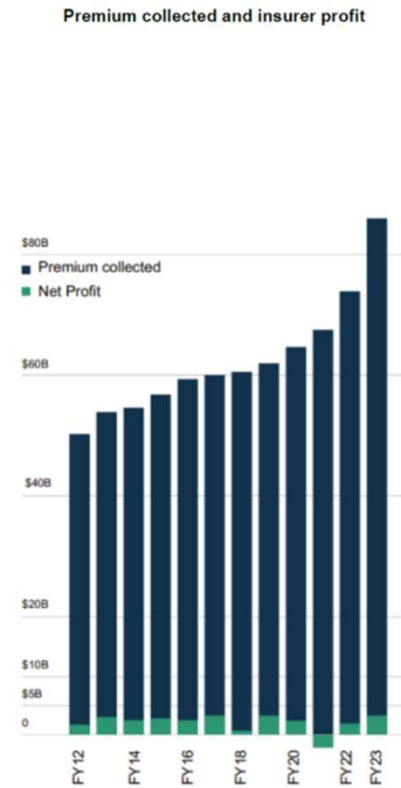
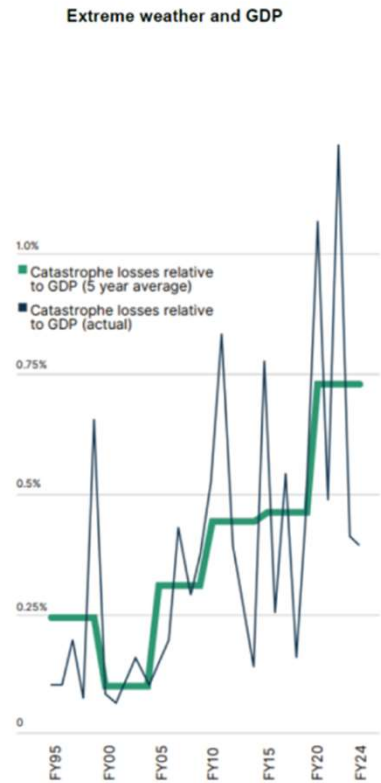
Since 2019, there have been at least 16 natural disasters that have had insurance costs exceed \$1 billion.
 The impact on the economy is in the hundreds of billions.
 60 + lives have been lost
 Tens of thousands displaced

Black Saturday Bushfires 2009
 >\$1.3bn
 173 lives lost
 2,000 homes lost
 7,500 homeless
 450 hectares destroyed

Brisbane floods 2011
 2 bn
 36 lives lost

2022+
 Cyclone Jasper (Qld)
 Ex-tropical Cyclone Alfred (Qld)
 Floods (SE Qld and Nth NSW) (24-25)
 \$7-9 bn +

Insurance costs 1bn



Home insurance premiums rose 14% between 2022–23—the biggest increase in a decade.

Around 1.6 million households, especially in cyclone/flood zones, now face insurance affordability stress, with premiums up to 30% higher, meaning over A\$5,200 annually.

Repeated events are making some regions uninsurable, especially after Lismore’s floods and more recent NSW flooding.

2019-20 BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES



 Medical Republic
<https://www.medicalrepublic.com.au/a-leadership-thro...>

A leadership through raging fires, and the unstoppable virus

8 Sept 2020 — Stepping down from the AMA presidency in the middle of a health crisis has brought mixed feelings, says Dr Tony Bartone.

 Australian Medical Association

AMA releases new paper on doctors' ethical stance during pandemics and natural disasters

 Australian Medical Association (NSW)
<https://www.amansw.com.au/health-alerts-and-disaster-...>

Health Alerts and Disaster Management Resources

Bushfire crisis resources · Bushfires and smoke · Extreme Heat · Mental health advice for Australians returning from disaster-affected areas.

 The Conversation


Bushfires, drought, COVID: why rural Australians' mental health is taking a battering

 InSight+

Bushfires: implications for medical workforce and education | InSight+

 The Guardian

Doctors warn people may die as public health impact from Australian fire pollution bites

 Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Doctors worry 'unprecedented' bushfire smoke creating new health risks



 Australian Medical Association
Implement Bushfire Royal Commission ...

On bushfire anniversary, doctors commit to work together on ...

26 Oct 2020 — Support policies that acknowledge the health benefits of a transition...

 Australian Medical Association



 Australian Medical Association
<https://www.ama.com.au/articles/doctors-sign-open-...>

Doctors sign open letter calling for meaningful action on ...

15 Sept 2021 — The letter calls on the Prime Minister to commit to an ambitious national plan to protect health by cutting Australia's greenhouse gas emissions ...

Response, recovery - Australian Medical Association (NSW)
20 Apr 2020 — President Dr Kean-Seng Lim. Vice President Dr Danielle...



MEDIA RELEASE

New bushfire smoke research important


Published 15 January 2020

AMA raises alarm on the health impacts of climate change

3 Dec 2020 — "As detailed in the Countdown report being launched today, the 2019-20...

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A photograph of two firefighters in full protective gear, including helmets and jackets, standing in front of a large, intense fire at night. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with a lot of smoke and sparks. The firefighters are looking towards the fire, and one appears to be holding a hose or tool. The scene is dramatic and highlights the danger of the job.

"THE GPS THEMSELVES, AND THEIR STAFF AND THEIR CLINICS, MAY WELL HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FIRES – THROUGH LOSS OF BUILDINGS AND THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT. THEY, TOO, NEED TO BE SUPPORTED IN THE RECOVERY. THIS WOULD INCLUDE FAST TRACKING PROCESSES TO ALLOW THEM TO ENGAGE LOCUMS WHERE NEEDED" AMA 2020

"COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING WOULD ENSURE THAT GPS OPERATED LOCALLY UNDER THE DIRECTION OF LOCAL DISASTER COMMAND IN A COORDINATED FASHION TO ENSURE RESPONSIBLE USE OF SCANT RESOURCES IN PRESSURE SITUATIONS. CHAOS MUST BE AVERTED."AMA 2020

2022 SE QLD/ NE NSW (Lismore) FLOODS

 The Sydney Morning Herald

The doctors sleeping under desks because they're too tired to drive

 Medical Republic

Practices 'wiped out' in Lismore floods

 Australian Medical Association


Healthcare after Lismore floods and hospital capacity

 Australian Medical Association

Health providers impacted by disasters must be considered essential services

 Australian Medical Association

Governments failing to help natural disaster victims access health care, AMA says

 Australian Broadcasting Corporation

'We're absolutely despairing': Doctors claim lives at risk as health services struggle to rebuild after floods

Australian Medical Association leads push to secure disaster grants for healthcare providers

By Saunders Miranda By Hannah Ross ABC North Coast Floods

Fri 16 Sep 2022



Lismore Clinic experienced its highest and most damaging flood this year. (Supplied Lismore Clinic)



Exclusive NSW floods

Lismore nursing home left to fend for itself as flood inundated premises





“It’s been a horrific year for communities impacted by flooding in several states across the country, and both governments’ abject failure to support the ongoing healthcare needs of residents following these events is disgraceful,” Professor Robson said.

Governments failing to help disaster victims access health care, AMA says.
7 December 2022

“People need to know following a disaster they will be able to see their doctor for vaccinations, receive ongoing care for chronic conditions, and get prescriptions for life-saving medicine,” Professor Robson said.

AMA welcomes landmark funding agreement for Lismore health service providers
17 February 2023

Ex-tropical Cyclone Albert 2025



Australian Medical Association

<https://www.ama.com.au> › qld › news › Medical-emerg... ⋮

[Medical emergencies during natural disasters](#)



Australian Medical Association (NSW)

<https://www.amansw.com.au> › support-available-cyclone... ⋮

[Support available - Cyclone Alfred](#)




Supporting Queensland doctors,
creating better health.

MEDIA RELEASE

WED 5 MARCH 2025

**Safeguarding community health and safety
amid cyclone threat**



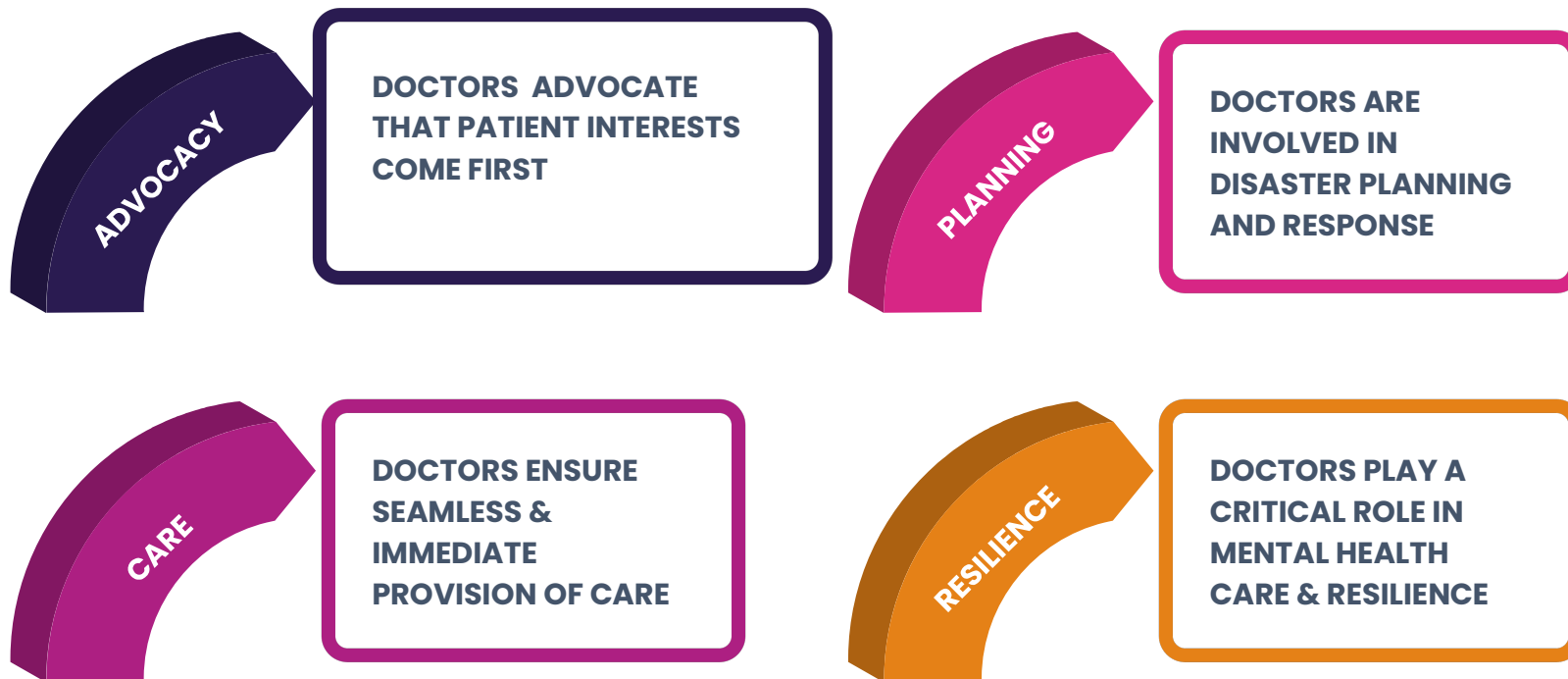
"The decision makers were unclear" Clinician

"Once we reported for duty, the cyclone moved slowly... we were not allowed to leave the hospital for days... we were away from our own families and did not get paid when we weren't rostered on..." Clinician

"We were told to come to the hospital, regardless whether the route was safe for travel"
clinician

"Patients were told to come to the hospital if they had chronic conditions and/or life support needing power... they were given stretchers to sleep on (for days)...they were unbearably uncomfortable" Patient

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IS FRONT & CENTRE IN DISASTER RESPONSE



AMA POLICY CHANGE

Supporting GPs in the Immediate Aftermath of a Natural Disaster

2021. GPs and their practices are often affected when a natural disaster strikes in a community. In order to...

Australian Medical Association

Welcome next step in formalising Australia's new Centre for ...

4 days ago — Welcome next step in formalising Australia's new Centre for Disease Control...

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SUBMISSION

Wednesday, 20 September 2023

AMA submission to the Department of Home Affairs – Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response

W | www.ama.com.au
39 Brisbane Ave Barton ACT 2600
PO Box 6090 Kingston ACT 2604

Australian Medical Association
<https://www.ama.com.au/articles/climate-change-an...>

Climate Change and Human Health - 2004. Revised 2008. ...

28 Aug 2015 — The AMA recognises the latest findings regarding the science of climate change, the role of humans, past observations and future projections.

2017

2020

2021

AMA 2020

2022

2023

2024

2025

Australian Medical Association
<https://www.ama.com.au/articles/australian-national-...>

Australian National Centre for Disease Control (CDC) - 2017

4 Jan 2017 — The AMA calls for the immediate establishment of an Australian National Centre for Disease Control (CDC), with a national focus on current ...



AMA Position Statement

Ethical Considerations for Medical Practitioners in Disaster Response in Australia

2022¹

Australian Medical Association

AMA submission to the Department of Health and Aged Care - consultation on the role and functions of an Australian Centre for Disease Control



POSITION STATEMENT

Australian Medical Association
One Health

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PO Box 6090 Kingston ACT 2604

AMA submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration ...

19 May 2020 — The role of the Medical Profession
Although the AMA has advocated on this for many...

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Covid-19 report: Time for jurisdictions to back in federal government on CDC

The Australian Medical Association welcomes the federal government's release today of the Covid-19 report and the renewed focus on getting an Australian Centre...

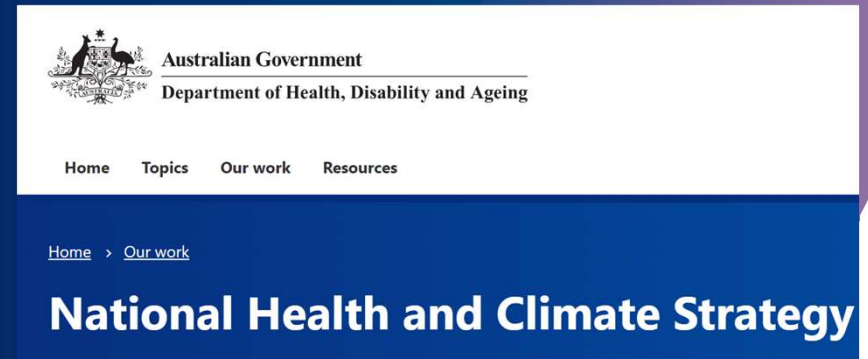
29 Oct 2024

Climate change is a public health challenge.
The AMA is taking steps to drive action through all levels of government



The AMA hosted the very first round table to discuss mitigation and adaptation plans to protect at risk populations from heatwaves: *Rising Temperatures, Rising Risks*

The AMA cohosts a yearly webinar with the Doctors for the Environment (DEA): *Climate change and Sustainability: Leadership and Action from Australian Doctors.*



The AMA is a member of the Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group



Thank you