



# STATEMENT: FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SUMMIT ON EXTREME HEAT AND HEALTH



# Summit Co-Chairs



## PROFESSOR FIONA STANLEY

### *Co-chair of the Australian Summit on Extreme Heat and Health*

Professor Fiona Stanley is the Founding Director of the Telethon Kids Institute, a Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Western Australia and Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne. She is a former Australian of the Year and Companion of the Order of Australia.

Professor Stanley is a researcher trained in maternal and child health, and epidemiology and is noted for her public health work. She will be speaking on the impact of heat on health.



## PROFESSOR LESLEY HUGHES

### *Co-chair of the Australian Summit on Extreme Heat and Health*

Professor Lesley Hughes is a Distinguished Professor of Biology and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Integrity & Development) at Macquarie University.

She is a Climate Councillor and former Lead Author in the IPCC's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report. She is also a Director for WWF Australia, a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, the Director of the Biodiversity Node for the NSW Adaptation Hub and a member of the expert advisory committee for Future Earth Australia.

Professor Hughes will be speaking to you today on climate change and its impacts in Australia, and particularly the impact of climate change on heatwaves.

**DR. ELIZABETH HANNA***Co-chair of the Australian Summit on Extreme Heat and Health*

Dr Elizabeth (Liz) Hanna is the President of the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA). Dr Hanna joined the Australian National University late in 2008, to work with Prof Tony McMichael on Climate Change & Health. She convened Australia's National Climate Change Adaptation Research Network for Human Health, spanning all areas that climate change affects human health and wellbeing.

She has designed and conducted climate change vulnerability assessments for Australia and the Pacific Island Nations as a government consultant. Her own research focusses on adaption to climate change, in the areas of rural exposures, disasters, fires and predominantly in the area of heat. She is the Director of the 'Working in the Heat' Program, measuring occupational heat exposures, acclimatisation limits, and protective adaptation policies.

# Statement

## The co-chairs of the Australian Summit on Extreme Heat and Health issue the following statement

Heatwaves have killed more Australians than all other extreme climate events combined and are putting health professionals, hospitals, health and community services, and workers under increasing pressure.

More frequent and intense heatwaves driven by climate change pose an immediate and pressing risk to the health of Australians. Whilst all Australians are at risk from heatwaves, socially disadvantaged groups are most vulnerable.

In recent years, many state and local government bodies have made significant progress in addressing the adverse impacts of extreme heat on health and the health sector by establishing heat response plans and strategies. It is important that this momentum accelerates, in order to improve heatwave preparedness and resilience for all Australians.

For the last two days, twenty-four experts representing a wide variety of disciplines including emergency management and medicine, nursing and midwifery, workplace health, health policy, community services, planning and the built environment, environmental science, and physiology, came together to discuss how to improve Australia's preparedness for increasing extreme heat.

All the experts agreed that extreme heat is a critical and growing health issue for Australians. While the health sector is key, it is only one part of the response.

Summit co-chairs Professor Fiona Stanley, Professor Lesley Hughes and Dr. Liz Hanna, joined by key summit participants, issued the following statement:

Three key actions are needed to more effectively address the health and health sector impacts of heatwaves.

1. **Prevent and Prepare:** tackle the health impacts of heat extremes by:

a. Mitigating, adapting and building resilience to the challenges of extreme heat

b. Incorporating climate-sensitive urban design into planning our cities and towns. This includes smart infrastructure, housing, energy, water, shade and precinct planning.

2. **Respond:** a whole of government response is required, including all levels of government across all states and regions. This response should include:

a. The acknowledgement of heatwaves as a hazard

b. The real time release of impact data and forecasts by government agencies during and immediately following a heatwave, including data on the correlation between heatwaves and mortality/morbidity

c. Development and implementation of a scaled response to heatwaves, similar to the scaled bushfire response

d. Improved understanding of the impacts of heatwaves on human health, the environment, infrastructure and the economy, now and into the future

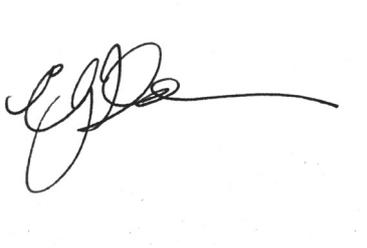
e. The assessment of current and future response capacity to heatwaves

**3. Educate:** We need to build awareness about heatwave risks, and develop effective warnings for the public, health and community services, and the Australian workforce.

- a. Education should be supported by evidence-based advice and analysis of heatwaves and health impacts.
- b. Behavioural and cultural change is required to prevent and reduce heat stress.
- c. Health and community services require improved support to assist vulnerable groups.
- d. Educate workforces about heat stress and how it affects them.

It is vital that Australian governments, at all levels, continue to address this significant and growing issue to reduce the impact of heatwaves on Australian's health and on the health and community sectors and, ultimately, to save lives.

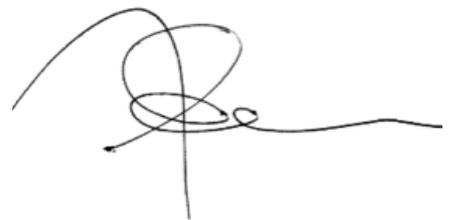
This Communique is signed by the Australian Summit on Extreme Heat and Health Co-Chairs:



*Dr. Elizabeth Hanna*



*Professor Lesley Hughes*



*Professor Fiona Stanley*

# Summit Brief Agenda

## Public Panel:

### Tackling the Silent Killer:

### Climate Change,

### Heatwaves and Health

10am-12pm

- › Venue: Ella Latham Theatre, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne
- › Panelists: Prof Lesley Hughes, Prof Fiona Stanley, Dr Stephen Parnis, Dr Liz Hanna (facilitator)

The Panellists will discuss the challenges of climate change and extreme heat events for human health and the health sector, and what can be done to better prepare for the worsened conditions which will likely be experienced in coming decades.

## Summit Day One

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

### Roundtable Session One:

### The Challenges

1.15pm-5pm

- › Venue: Academic Centre, University College, University of Melbourne

1.15pm: Introductions and Overview of the Agenda

2.10pm: Setting the Context

2.45pm: Discussion

An opportunity for participants to share their or their organisation's experience of the impact of extreme heat on health and the health sector.

3.15pm: Afternoon Tea Break

3.30pm: Discussion

An opportunity to consider the challenges of addressing the impact of extreme heat on health and the health sector.

4.45pm: Conclusions and Wrap-up of Day One

## Summit Day Two

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March

### Roundtable Session Two:

### Preparedness

### and Resilience

9am-12.30pm

- › Venue: Academic Centre, University College, University of Melbourne

What can be done to better address the impacts of extreme heat on health and the health sector in the context of a changing climate? What should be prioritised to achieve this?

9am: Reflections on Day One

9.45am: Discussion

10.30am: Morning Tea Break

10.45am: Identifying Key Priorities

12pm: Conclusion and Final Words

12.30pm: Summit Concludes

**“Heatwaves have caused  
more deaths in Australia  
than any other extreme  
weather event”**

*- Climate Council (2016) Silent Killer: Climate Change and the Health Impacts of Extreme Heat.*

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