

"Australian social workers have joined social workers worldwide in declaring a climate emergency," said AASW National President Christine Craik, who attended the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Asian-Pacific Social Work Conference in September. "Climate change is the greatest challenge that we face and as social workers, and we are united in our call for immediate action from governments in Australia, and across the world. The changes confronting our environment because of global warming are already profound and extensive, making climate policy an urgent responsibility for governments," she said. "As social workers, we work with communities who are hardest hit by climate change and we appreciate that while climate change is affecting the entire population, the social, health and economic burden is falling most heavily on already vulnerable people." A significant number of environmental disasters as a result of climate change are occurring in the Asia-Pacific region (especially Pacific island nations) and the burden on communities and the consequences of this make it very much an issue for Australian social workers. "The socioeconomic status of individuals, groups and communities is directly linked to their ability to adapt to increased extreme weather events like heatwaves and floods. As we continue to see heat records being broken, increased electricity prices alone can further compound poverty and disadvantage." For social workers, climate change is also a social justice issue. "Despite what our Prime Minister might say, Australia is failing to address climate change as evidenced by the continued drop in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals global rankings. Australia is now ranked 37th in the world SDG Index (down from 26th) and behind New Zealand, Canada, the USA and the UK. "Climate action is needed urgently, and we need to begin by listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they have lived sustainably with the land for over 40,000 years," she said. In declaring a climate emergency, the AASW renews its call for immediate government action to reduce emissions and meet our SDG and IPCC commitments. Climate action will be a key stream at the 2019 AASW Conference. The theme is "Challenging Inequality: Working together for a just society" and it will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia from 7-9 November 2019. <https://www.aasw2019conference.com.au/> ENDS

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