

Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy: The why, what and how

Dr Sharon Campbell

**Project Lead, National Healthy Air Strategy
Centre for Safe Air**

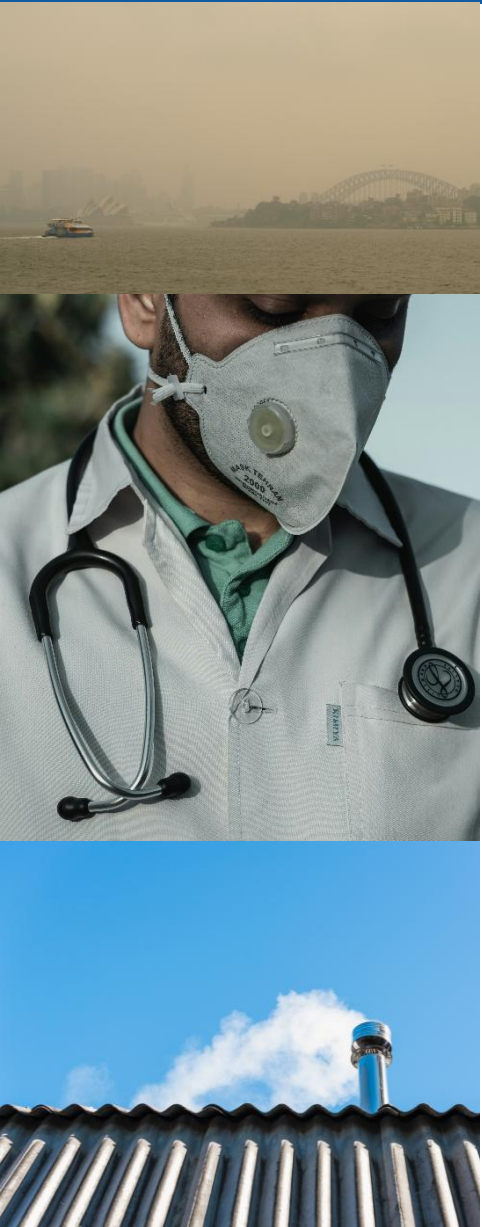
CASANZ conference - August 2026



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

Why do we need a National Strategy?

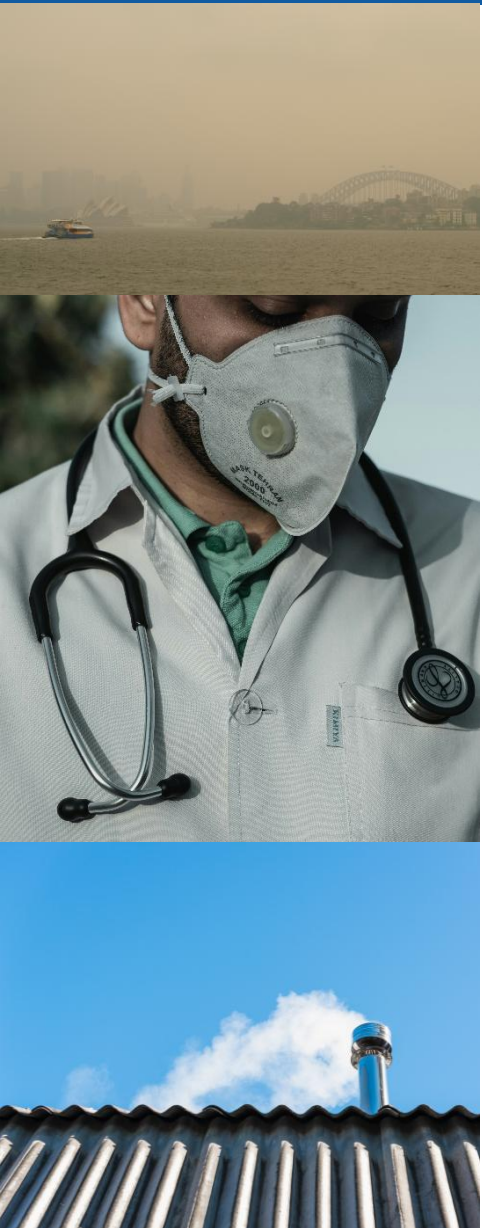
- Breathing clean air is fundamental to life
- Many Australians routinely exposed to unhealthy air, from both indoor and outdoor sources
- Comprehensive **public health** strategies exist for food safety and water quality, but are piecemeal for air quality: a critical public health gap
- Enormous opportunities to deliver lasting health, productivity and cost benefits



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

Why do we need a National Strategy?

- Acknowledge significant and widespread work happening in air quality which needs ongoing support
 - Jurisdictional EPAs: enforcement, monitoring, reporting, education
 - Commonwealth DCCEE: AAQ NEPMs
 - Australian CDC: air quality as a priority
 - NSW and Victorian Clean Air Strategy
 - Jurisdictional health depts: public health messaging and education
 - SafeWork Australia and jurisdictional WHS bodies
 - Local councils: local policy, education, issue notices, planning

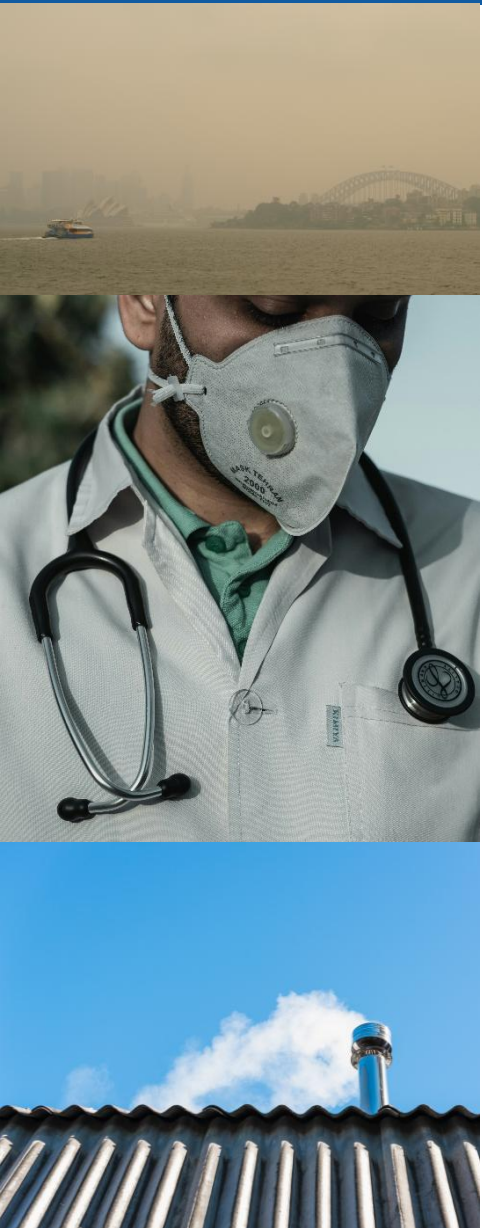


Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

Why do we need a National Strategy?

- Key hazards and sources
 - airborne pathogens
 - landscape fire smoke (planned and unplanned)
 - wood and gas heating and cooking
 - transport
 - industry
 - mould
 - pollen
 - microplastics
 - PFAS

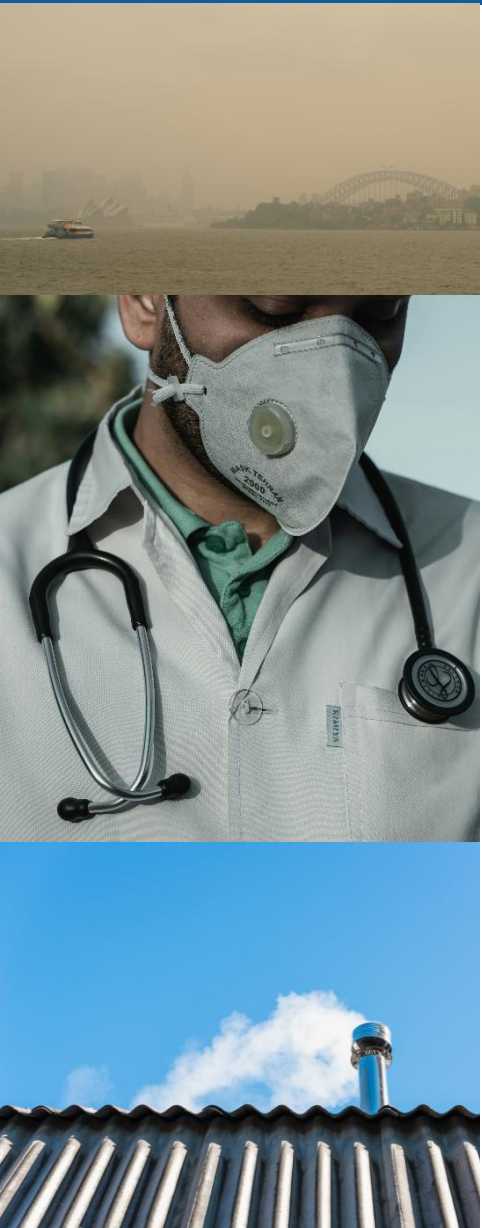
Location and
time/season
dependent



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

Why do we need a National Strategy?

- Unsafe air has significant health consequences
 - Long-term exposure: shapes population health patterns of many chronic diseases
 - Short-term exposure: exacerbations of lung and heart conditions and infectious disease transmission
- While everyone is at risk, some people are at higher risk
 - older
 - younger
 - pregnant
 - First Nations
 - chronic illness
 - social disadvantage



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

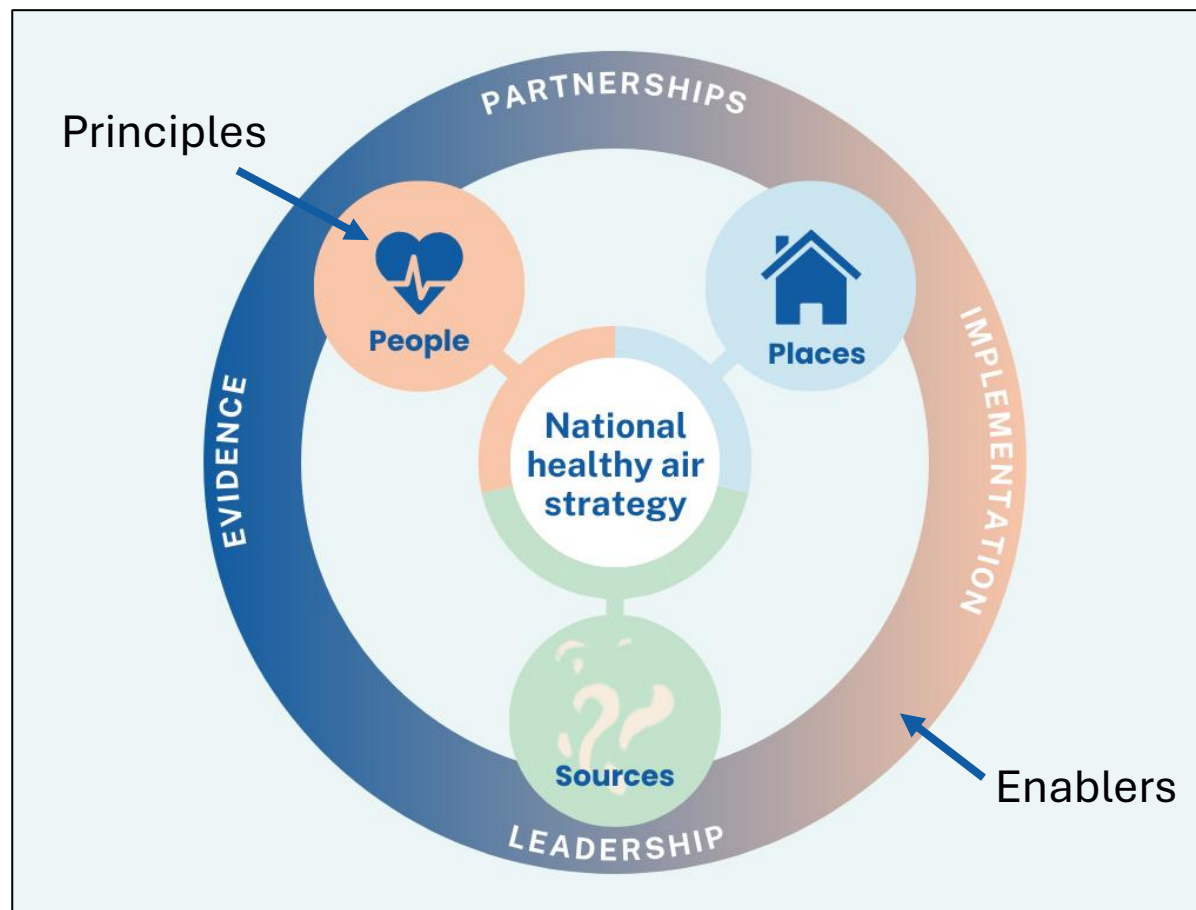
Why do we need a National Strategy?

- Unsafe air has significant economic consequences
 - Long-term impact from COVID est at \$10 bill pa
 - PM_{2.5} emissions from traffic, industry and wood heaters est at \$6 bill pa
 - Direct health costs of allergic respiratory disease est at \$1 bill pa
 - Smoke-related mortality burden from the 2019-20 Australian fires est at \$2 bill



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

What would a National Strategy look like?

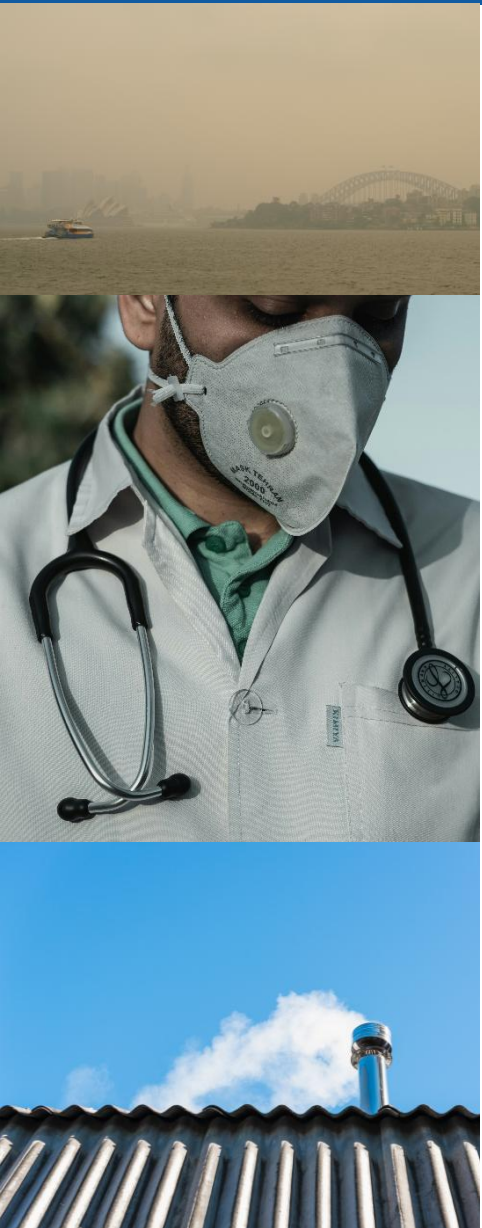


Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

What would a National Strategy look like?



- Everyone is at risk
- Some groups have higher risk
- Reduce health inequities

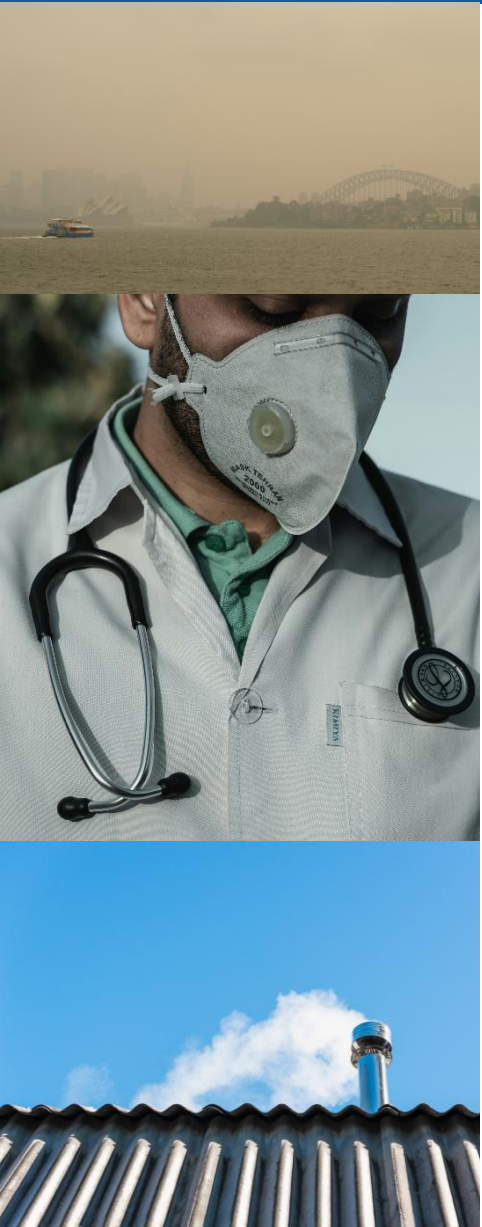


Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

What would a National Strategy look like?



- Workplaces (both indoor and outdoor)
- Childcare centres
- Schools
- Healthcare facilities
- Residential and aged care facilities
- Homes
- Community transport



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

What would a National Strategy look like?

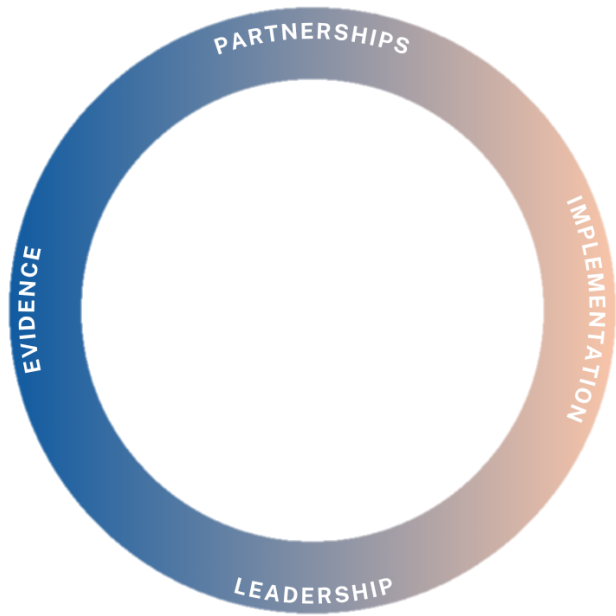


- airborne pathogens ←
- landscape fire smoke (planned and unplanned) ←
- wood and gas heating and cooking ←
- transport ←
- industry ←
- mould ←
- pollen ←
- microplastics ←
- PFAS ←



Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

What would a National Strategy look like?



- Leadership
 - National leadership and coordination to counteract fragmentation
- Evidence
 - Translation of research into policy/practice
- Partnerships
 - Interdisciplinary effort required
- Implementation
 - Long-term funding and commitment

Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

How do we get there?

- Pre-budget submission
 - Requesting investment of \$40.5 mill over three years to:
 1. establish a time-limited National Healthy Air Taskforce to undertake national consultation and deliver a National Healthy Air Strategy within 12 months
 2. develop and launch a national public awareness and education campaign on air quality
- Consensus Statement



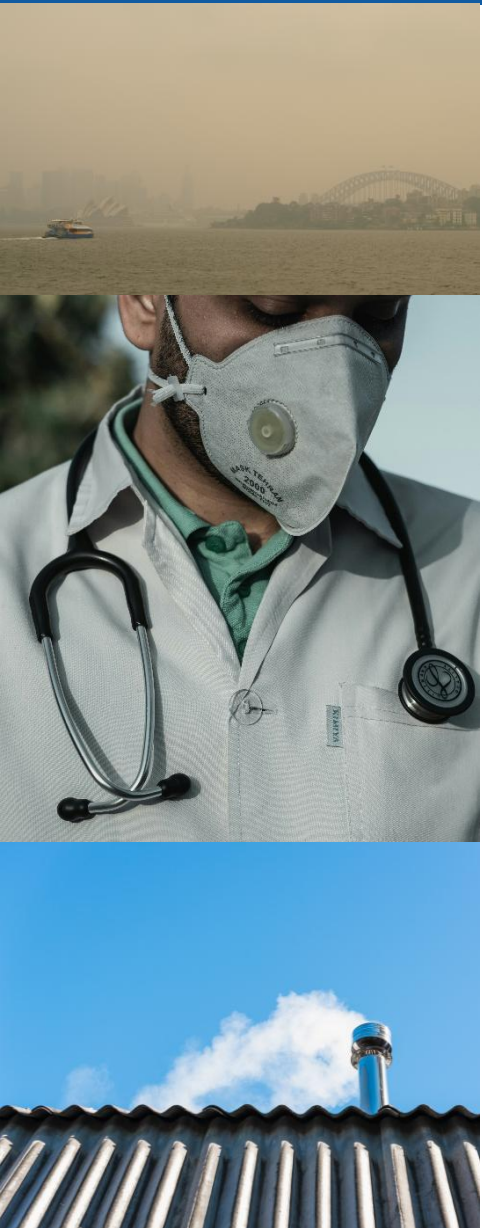
Towards a National Healthy Air Strategy

How do we get there?

- **Support** from multiple partners and sectors is vital
- **View and endorse** the pre-budget submission and Consensus Statement at <https://safeair.org.au/national-healthy-air-strategy>
- Contact sharon.campbell@utas.edu.au



Questions?





Sign the National Healthy Air Strategy

safeair.org.au/national-healthy-air-strategy