

Global and regional health impacts of climate change

Kathryn Bowen

At all scales – local to global – the health impacts of climate change will be felt very differently. In some places, such as low-lying small island countries, the climate hazards are powerful and visible storm surges and slow but insidious sea-level rise. In other places, such as large urban inland settlements, the impending threats are likely to be increasing bouts of extreme heat and changes in distribution of vector-borne diseases like dengue. One size-fits all solutions will not work, given the difference in climate hazards and the varying degree of adaptive capacity. Importantly, it is impossible to respond to the health impacts on climate without also understanding and acknowledging the policy and political context we are working within.

This talk will outline the latest climate science as it relates to human health and wellbeing, with reference to the recent IPCC AR6 cycle, as well as spotlighting the regional health impacts of climate change in the Pacific. The political economy that surrounds the ‘solutions space’ will be discussed. Policy efforts underway to rapidly develop the solutions that we need will also be highlighted.

Prof Kathryn Bowen is a leading, internationally-recognised expert on the science and policy of sustainability (particularly climate change) and global health issues, with 20 years experience in original public health research, science assessment, capacity development and policy advice. She thrives on interdisciplinary, energetic and stimulating work environments where the emphasis is on implementing policy-relevant and evidence-based sustainability programmes. Bowen is regularly commissioned by international bilateral and multilateral agencies (e.g. WHO, UNEP, UNDP, ADB, GIZ, DFAT) to co-design solutions for sustainable futures. She works to empower colleagues and decision-makers and collaborate with diverse stakeholders to drive positive outcomes. Her career highlight to date has been her nomination by the Australian Government to be a Lead Author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Health Chapter.

