

Dear Editor

Kudos to the Journal for highlighting how important it is for the medical community, especially those involved in child and adolescent health, to celebrate the Greta Thunbergs, Malala Yousafzais, and Emma Gonzalezes of the world and their determination to take charge of their own futures.<sup>1</sup> We should be proud, not disparaging,<sup>2</sup> of children who possess such clarity, independence of thought, and grit that they are willing to exercise their right to protest (and right to a healthy future) on the world stage. It is equally satisfying to know that tens of thousands of Australian students participated in the march, in part *because* they have received such a quality education - lessons on environmental preservation and sustainability are now embedded into the educational curriculum in thousands of schools nationwide.<sup>3</sup>

Children don't walk out of school *en masse* for frivolous reasons; the medical community should take heed. Despite 20+ years of mounting evidence of the widespread negative impacts on human health,<sup>4-6</sup> climate change continued to be viewed as "just an environmental issue" until the Lancet meticulously painted "the bigger picture" for the medical community as a desperate wake-up call. From there, the Australian Medical Association, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners and their counterparts in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada responded with their own statements on the need to tackle climate change to protect health. The World Health Organization identified climate change as one of the top ten threats to global public health in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

We as the medical profession must become an authority on this, as it is likely the greatest, yet most insidious, human health risk of the century. It is also our responsibility to establish these linkages for our patients and for the public. A recent Sustainability Victoria (a Victorian statutory authority) study demonstrated that once these connections are made for people, the health impact lens is meaningful and immediate, and a potential motivator for action.<sup>8</sup>

There is no equivocating that climate change threatens human life and wellbeing. There are no alternative facts. The dots are well and truly connected for those who choose to see them.

Children have the most to lose if we fail - in health, resources, future opportunity, and global goodwill. Their collective voice must be heard, and it is our job to amplify it.

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