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**Contact: Samantha Smith, NCO at
Environmental Health Australia**

Phone: 0423 437 732

Email: samantha.smith@eh.org.au

Shortage of Environmental Health professionals amid climate crisis

A lack of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), leaves Australia at risk of failing to meet its public health and safety goals

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Australia has to address the critical shortage of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), who are responsible for protecting public health from the risks of climate change.

Despite increasing demand, Australia is currently experiencing a severe shortage of Environmental Health professionals. A lack of people qualified in the area of environmental health, combined with the complexities of climate change, has left the public health system unable to adequately respond.

This is a major cause for concern, as the impacts of climate change and environmental health issues are far-reaching and have already had disastrous effects on human health.

The Skills Priority List 2022, shows that Environmental Health Officers, (ANZSCO 251311) are “moderate” in terms of national future demand with identified shortages in Queensland and Northern Territory only. But research by Environmental Health Australia (EHA) has identified a severe shortage of suitably qualified or experienced Environmental Health Officers across Australia.

One of EHA’s core values is to make sure every state and territory maintains enough accredited environmental health staff members around Australia.

As the premier environmental health organisation in Australia, EHA has roughly 1,400 members across the country from all facets of the environmental work sphere.

Previously employers have relied on overseas applicants to fill the shortfall from university graduates in environmental health. However, post COVID-19’s reduced migration compounded with limited graduations from Universities and retirements, means the shortage in metropolitan, and especially regional roles, has worsened.

Under the professions who can obtain a subclass visa 186, 189 or 190, Environmental Health Officers need to be included to help the shortfall.

These visa options are available for many other health professionals including Nurses, Health Promotion Officers, Occupational Health Officers and other similar health professions but not for Environmental Health Officers.

Without an adequate number of EHOs, Australia is at risk of failing to meet its public health and safety goals and address the effects and risks of climate change on public health.

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For more information and spokespeople, please contact Samantha Smith on 0423 437 732.

Environmental Health Australia is committed to the professional development and status of its members and the enhancement of environmental health standards and services to the community through advocacy, promotion, education and leadership.