



# Australian Federation of Medical Women CSW66 Parallel Event

“Australian Women Doctors: Climate Change and Gender Equity Advocates and Activists”

## PROGRAMME

8am EST **Welcome, and Acknowledgement of First Nations Custodians of the Land** **Dr Magdalena Simonis**  
President, AFMW

**Welcome** **Dr Desiree Yap AM**  
Vice President Western Pacific Region MWIA

**Climate change affects women more than men - An OPED.** **Dr Magdalena Simonis**  
President, AFMW

**Climate change and the influence on women and child health.** **Dr Helena Franco**  
Co-chair, Young AFMW

20 March 2022  
12am – 1.30am AEDT; 8am – 9.30am EST

Virtual Forum [REGISTER HERE](#)

### HOSTS

#### AFMW

Dr Magdalena Simonis  
President AFMW  
[afmw.org.au](http://afmw.org.au)

#### yAFMW

Dr Marissa Daniels



Australian Federation  
of Medical Women  
the voice of Australian medical women





**Empowerment of women - the good work being done by women to mitigate climate change.**

**Dr Kimberley Humphrey**  
Deputy Chair of Doctors for the Environment Australia

**Gender, climate change and natural disasters: Health effects and global policy implications.**

**Dr Emily Horan**  
Co-chair, Young AFMW

**Women doctors leading in climate activism.**

**Assoc Prof Deborah Colville**  
AFMW

**How and why I became an activist.**

**Dr Kate Wylie**  
Founder of Climate Medicine

**I am not an activist, but I am concerned.**

**Dr Madhura Naidu**  
President, Victorian Medical Women's Society

**Putting a spot-light on iron deficiency, and its impact on women's empowerment and health in our responses to climate change.**

**Dr Lydia Pitcher**  
Vice President, AFMW

**Digital Health to advance rural health equity.**

**Dr Marissa Daniels**  
Co-chair, Young AFMW



Promoting awareness of the relationships between environmental issues and social justice issues: How two medical women's NGOs, AFMW and ALMA, are working towards a sustainable future through environment-focussed subcommittees.

**Dr Liz Rickman and Dr Sarah Burrowes**  
Australian Lesbian Medical Association and AFMW

Climate Denial is like the denial of violence against women and girls.

**Dr Marjorie Cross OAM, Dr Anita Hutchison and Prof Amanda Barnard.**

9.25am

**Closing Remarks**

**Dr Magdalena Simonis**  
President, AFMW

## PROGRAMME – Speakers & Abstracts

### Climate change affects women more than men – an OPED.

*Dr Magdalena Simonis*

*Magdalena.Simonis@mac.com*

#### Biography

**Magdalena Simonis** MBBS FRACGP DRANZCOG MHHS.

Magdalena Simonis is a GP, government health advisor, Senior Research Fellow with the Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence, University of Melbourne and a leading women's health expert and advocate. Magdalena holds positions on several not-for-profit organisations bridging gaps across the health sector, whilst informing their health initiatives. She is on the Expert Committee of Quality Care for the RACGP, President and National Coordinator of the Australian Federation of Medical Women, co-Chair Medical Women's international Association (MWIA) Scientific and Research Subcommittee, and Chair of the MWIA Mentoring and Leadership group. Magdalena's interests are in community health, chronic disease prevention and the development of sustainable, equitable healthcare services. She is also a passionate climate activist, and has founded the AFMW Climate Health Action Group (CHAG) and has written the climate change resolution for AFMW, VMWS and MWIA.

#### Abstract

Gender and climate change are integrally linked. Women are affected by the effects of climate change more than men due to their traditional family roles as carers, their lower incomes, and reduced access to credit, education, technology and resources. As doctors who work in the frontline supporting people's health, we see these impacts and are here to advocate for climate change policies and post COVID-19 recovery plans, that acknowledge this and address the root source of the problem - which is gender inequity. This talk is based upon the OPED authored by Dr Magdalena Simonis AFMW and Dr Kimberley Humphrey DEA.

<https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2021/33/climate-change-impacts-women-more-than-men/>



## Climate change and the influence on women and child health.

*Dr Helena Franco*

### Biography

Dr Helena Franco is an Australian trained doctor, who has worked in Orthopaedics and Ear Nose and Throat surgery. She is currently studying at the Harvard Medical School as an R.G Menzies Scholar of Australia, completing a Masters in Medical Sciences in Global Health Delivery. She has a strong interest in global health and equitable surgical access.

### Abstract

Climate Change will affect the health of the entire population. With the potential for climate change and environmental stressors exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities, literature has started to identify such key areas.

This presentation will summarise the published literature surrounding the gender inequalities associated with climate change, particularly for women and children. It will also suggest further areas for health data and research required to understand the impact of climate change on these groups. There is a requirement for government and non-government organisations to understand the impact of climate change on women and children, to prevent climate change acting as a multiplier of current inequalities.



Empowerment of women - the good work being done by women to mitigate climate change.

*Dr Kimberley Humphrey*

**Biography**

To be confirmed

**Abstract**

To be confirmed



## Gender, climate change and natural disasters: Health effects and global policy implications.

*Dr Emily Horan*

### Biography

Dr Emily Horan is currently working as a Principal house officer in the Plastic and Reconstructive surgery unit at the Mater Hospital. She is the Secretary for the Queensland Medical Women's Society, and co-chair of the Young Australian Federation of Medical Women. She holds a Bachelor of Biomedical Science, Bachelor of Medical Studies, Doctor of Medicine from Bond University and is currently completing a Masters of Public Health and Tropical Medicine from James Cook University.

### Abstract

Climate change and natural disasters pose a significant threat to global health and threaten to widen the existing gender-based health disparities between men and women. Women, especially those in low-income communities, are particularly vulnerable to the adverse physical and mental health outcomes of living through these events. The United Nations have developed international policies to consciously integrate a gendered perspective into disaster risk reduction and climate change strategies. They also recognise the need to empower women as public leaders, voices for policy development, and promote gender equitable and universally accessible responses, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. The policies provide the framework for countries to continue research, development, implementation, and reassessment of their strategies to improve on the impacts of climate change and natural disasters on women. It is our hope that by adopting these overarching goals and policies, we can make change and continue to support and empower women as educators, caregivers, and agents of social change.

## Women doctors leading in climate activism.

*Assoc Prof Deborah Colville*

### Biography

PhD MBBS FRANZCO FRACS Dip Epi MPH Cert Ed GAICD

An ophthalmic surgical educator, Deb works in Melbourne, Australia.

Melbourne is the land of First Nations peoples, the Warundjeri Tribe of the Aboriginal Kulin Nation.

She is a past National Coordinator for Australia of Medical Women's International Association which is an NGO of United Nations, attending CSW63 in 20219.

Associate Professor Deb Colville has qualifications in ophthalmic surgery, public health, governance and research methods both quantitative and qualitative. Her research interests are in gender, curriculum and medical policy making.

She takes leading roles in Australian medical politics and policy making, such as the Australian Medical Association 'Women in Medicine' Award for mentoring surgical trainees, in post-graduate Australian surgical specialist colleges, and in health services governance.

### Abstract

To be confirmed







## How and why I became an activist.

*Dr Kate Wylie*

### **Biography**

To be confirmed

### **Abstract**

To be confirmed





## I am not an activist, but I am concerned

*Dr Madhura Naidu*

### Biography

Madhura was first involved in the Victorian Medical Women's Society (VMWS) as a medical student at Monash University. She has since spent several years exploring medicine and surgery before choosing to specialise in intensive care. She is passionate about gender equality, especially in the workplace, as well as quality education for all. She is proud to be involved in VMWS and the Australian Federation of Medical Women and believes in medical women empowering and supporting each other to create and consolidate change in our world. In her free time, she loves expanding her horizons by travelling and engaging in her longtime interests of salsa dancing, photography and writing.

### Abstract

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is a formidable crisis in our world today. There is no doubt that young doctors are genuinely concerned; in fact, many of us are seeing first-hand the health consequences of climate change in our patients. However, despite this, many of us remain quiet in climate change activism and advocacy. This presentation will postulate briefly why young doctors may be inactive in this space, and suggest practical and manageable strategies that young doctors can implement immediately that can have a positive impact.

## Putting a spot-light on iron deficiency, and its impact on women's empowerment and health in our responses to climate change.

*Dr Lydia Pitcher*

### Biography

Dr Lydia Pitcher MBBS (Hons), BMedSc, FRACP, FRCPA, AMusA

Dr Lydia Pitcher is a dual qualified Haematologist/Oncologist (FRACP, FRCPA), and Director of BloodCare Australia. She has a strong commitment to Women, Children's and Physicians' Health, with a particular focus on Nutritional and Preventative Haematology. She has been involved in clinical practice, ethics, advocacy, research and teaching for more than 30 years, participating in many national and international committees.

She is currently Vice-President of the Australian Federation of Medical Women and is past President of the Queensland Medical Women's Society. She graduated with honours in Medicine (M.B.B.S.), interrupting her studies to complete a Bachelor of Medical Science, and an A.Mus.A. She undertook post-graduate training at The Hospital for Children, Great Ormond Street, London in 1998, and on return to Australia was the first female consultant to join in the now global ICON Group.

Dr Pitcher has worked as a consultant Haematologist/ Oncologist, stem cell transplant physician, and laboratory pathologist in Brisbane, and Auckland, New Zealand. She has a keen interest in indigenous health and is a long term board member of the Timor Children's Foundation.

### Abstract

To be confirmed





## Digital Health to advance rural health equity.

*Dr Marissa Daniels*

### Biography

Co-Chair, Young Australian Federation of Medical Women  
Information Technology Team Lead, Queensland Medical Women's Society  
Joint Website Officer, Medical Women's International Association

Marissa is an Australian based trainee in paediatric intensive care medicine with a passion for health equity. She is driven by a desire to support medical women to reach their potential, in the belief that empowered medical women change the world for the better.

### Abstract

Advances in digital health, accelerated by the pressures and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, offer opportunities to advance health equity in rural and remote Australia while also minimising the environmental impacts of medical education and health care delivery. Technological advances in educational resources and in the requisite supporting infrastructure have the potential to enable equitable access to learning opportunities for those undertaking medical education outside of capital cities and large training centres. This may be applicable to medical school as well as to postgraduate training and continuing education after attaining fellowship. It also applies to both technical and nontechnical skills, and the 'hidden medical curriculum'. Such advances may influence access to educational opportunities for those from diverse backgrounds, and in turn, contribute to increased workforce diversity and improved outcomes for patients and communities. At the same time, such approaches have the potential to maximise high quality, low carbon care.



Promoting awareness of the relationships between environmental issues and social justice issues: how two medical women's NGOs, AFMW and ALMA, are working towards a sustainable future through environment-focussed subcommittees.

*Dr Liz Rickman and Dr Sarah Burrowes, Australian Lesbian Medical Association*

#### **Biography – Dr Liz Rickman**

Liz Rickman is a medical practitioner working on Gadigal Land, Sydney Australia, with interests in Environmental Medicine, Women's Health and Climate Change. She is a member of Doctors for the Environment Australia, and has worked with community groups such as Total Environment Centre, Greenpeace and Australian Conservation Foundation, on issues including organochlorine usage, ocean dumping of waste oil products causing contamination of food sources, and Climate Change. She was involved in the early years of the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre, the first of its kind providing free health services to women in Australia. As a founding member of the Australian Lesbian Medical Association (ALMA), she worked with colleagues to gain special consultative status with ECOSOC for ALMA. Liz is part of the international Homeward Bound Project, which is involved in increasing leadership and visibility of STEMM women working in environmental issues internationally, and is a member of the Australian Federation of Medical Women.

#### **Biography – Dr Sarah Burrowes**

Sarah is General Practitioner from Naam/Melbourne on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country. Sarah worked in Aboriginal Community Controlled Aboriginal Health Services and more recently worked in youth health/youth mental health at headspace. Sarah is a member of AFMW, Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA), a member of Australia's Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA), and a member of the Australian Lesbian Medical Association (ALMA)'s Climate Action Group in which she co-created badges 'Doctor Concerned about Climate Emergency' and 'Concerned About the Climate Emergency' for health professionals, distributing these around Australia. Sarah is a mother, a vegetarian, and is passionate about



taking urgent action on the climate and ecological crises. She has coordinated ALMA's DocLIST project for over a decade, and intends to expand her work in psychological medicine / GP counselling and climate activism in the coming years.

### Abstract

The presenters will discuss the functions, actions and value of Climate / Sustainability Subcommittees in two medical women's NGOs: the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) and the Australian Lesbian Medical Association (ALMA).

The value of these subcommittees will be reviewed with regard to

1. How they contribute to driving the Sustainability Movement
2. How they are able to inform climate / environment-focussed NGOs on issues of gender equity and LGBTIQ+ social justice issues, with an understanding that climate change is driven by entrenched social systems that need to be addressed both locally and globally.
3. How the drivers of social inequity exacerbate the impacts of climate change on marginalised and other vulnerable groups, and therefore, the importance of our organisations listening to and advocating for meaningful inclusion of diverse and marginalised groups when working on issues around environmental sustainability, through collaboration with representative community groups and NGOs.



## Climate Denial is like the denial of violence against women and girls.

*Dr Marjorie Cross OAM, Dr Anita Hutchison and Prof Amanda Barnard.*

### **Biography – Dr Marjorie Cross OAM**

Dr Marjorie Cross OAM MBBS FRACGP is a general practitioner in New South Wales, and practice principal and owner of a rural general practice. She is a member of Special Interest Groups for the Prevention of Violence against Women for MWIA, RACGP and in WONCA (The World Organization of Primary Care Doctors). She is a Medical Educator and teaches General Practice Supervisors and Doctors-in-Training in NSW. She is a Rural Clinical Teacher of medical students at the Australian National University. She has been on the Executive of Australian Federation of Medical Women and currently represents the Medical Women's Society of the ACT and Region. In 2018, Dr Cross was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to medicine, particularly to doctors in rural areas.

### **Biography – Professor Amanda Barnard**

Professor Amanda Barnard is an academic GP, currently the Associate Dean Rural and Head of the Rural Clinical School at the Australian National University Medical School. Amanda has practiced as a General Practitioner in both rural and urban areas, and since 2006 has continued her clinical work in Braidwood in rural NSW

She has a long-held interest in gender equity and issues in women's health. She was a founding member of the WONCA Working Party of Mown and Family Medicine, and its chair from 2009-2013, and helped establish the Wonca Special Interest Group on Family Violence. She has delivered many international workshops in this capacity

An awarded teacher and educator, Amanda currently serves on various state and national education, training, and rural workforce committees and Boards and brings a rigorous primary care perspective to her work.



## Biography – Dr Anita Hutchison

MBBS, FRACGP, B.App.Sci (biomedical).

A thriving advocate victim survivor. Solo mother of adult feminists. Primary care doctor in urban Australia and Medical educator. Administrator of a solo doctor mother's group and administrator of NGO Doctors Against Violence Towards Women in Australia. Most recent project – a leader in the campaign to criminalise coercive control in NSW.


## Abstract

Violence against women and girls is a well-known problem. However, do natural disasters exacerbate this as climate change worsens? Violence against women and girls is a major problem across the globe. The World Health Organization reports that one third of women aged 15-49 have experienced intimate partner violence alone (Violence against women, 2021). The human and social costs of this are difficult to fully measure. However, ripple effects can last for generations. And, importantly, such violence is preventable. Movements such as #metoo show a growing social awareness of some aspects of the problem. However, it still amounts to an ongoing pandemic.

At the same time, natural disasters are increasing, due to climate change. Climate change increases the frequency and severity of many types of disasters, including tropical storms, droughts, and floods (USGS, n.d.). And this is already happening at an alarming rate. Between 2008-2017, over three-fourths of natural disasters were related to climate change. The number of disasters in these 10 years was double that in the 20 years of 1980-1999 (Thurston, Stöckl, & Ranganathan, 2021). Natural disasters are rapidly becoming our new normal. There is research that indicates increased violence against women and girls during times of bushfires in Australia.

Natural disasters often negatively affect women and girls at a higher rate than men. Mortality is often much higher, and sometimes they are an overwhelming majority of casualties. In one example, 90% of 140,000 deaths from a cyclone disaster were women. What could cause this





discrepancy? One factor could be the increased violence that women and girls are already known to face. If women and girls are already at an increased risk of violence, and if natural disasters create an environment that allows for more violence, then this could explain the increased death rate of women. There are also reports of increased rates of intimate partner violence and sexual assault after natural disasters, which further supports this hypothesis (Thurston, Stöckl, & Ranganathan, 2021).