

Suicide link to climate change unfounded, says researcher

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Credit: João Ferrão/Unsplash

A James Cook University researcher says there is no evidence climate change is associated with increased suicide rates, and health administrators who believe there is may be prioritizing a carbon net zero

policy over patient health. The paper is published in the journal *Australasian Psychiatry*.

JCU's Andrew Amos is Chair of the Queensland Section of Rural Psychiatry, RANZ College of Psychiatrists.

His research looked at the design of scientific articles supporting an association between [climate change](#) and increased rates of suicide.

He said the articles had been used in policy documents to advocate for radical changes to health care systems in pursuit of decarbonization.

"The Royal Australasian College of Physicians has recommended all Australian governments and health care systems commit to delivering net zero healthcare by 2040. The *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)* says medical colleges should champion climate change action, including decarbonizing colleges, hospitals, and [health systems](#).

"The MJA notes this conflicts with the common sense position of many health stakeholders," said Dr. Amos.

He said the strongest claims linking climate change and negative mental health outcomes have been made for suicide.

"The research cited to suggest an association between climate change and increased suicide does no such thing. None of the articles collected in the review has a design capable of investigating whether there is an association between temperature increases caused by climate change and rates of suicide," said Dr. Amos.

He said the study does not attempt to establish that there is no relationship between climate change and mental health outcomes, only that the cited evidence does not establish a relationship.

"Policy recommendations for radical changes in health care services have been based on misrepresented evidence. This analysis lends weight to the common sense view that the priority of health and mental health systems should be high quality health care, not climate change action."

More information: Andrew James Amos, Thinking clearly about climate change and mental health, *Australasian Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/10398562231172398](https://doi.org/10.1177/10398562231172398)

Provided by James Cook University

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