

Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)

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Alliance supports climate and health taskforce proposal

The Climate and Health Alliance has welcomed the proposal by the Victorian Greens at their campaign launch this week to establish a taskforce to tackle the impact of climate change on health.

The Alliance, launched last week at a national meeting of health leaders in Melbourne, is a coalition of groups and individuals in the health sector advocating for urgent policy action on climate change as a threat to human health.

Spokesperson for the Alliance, Fiona Armstrong, said a substantial body of national and international research demonstrates climate change poses significant threats to health from changing disease patterns, food and water insecurity, and deaths and injuries from severe weather events.

The report by international medical journal, The Lancet, in 2009 called for urgent action on climate change to protect public health. This has been acknowledged in the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework but Australia is yet to develop a national plan that acknowledges or seeks to address the risks posed to human health from climate change.

“We need a national plan that outlines how Australia will approach its share of the global responsibility to reduce emissions – this must include a plan to protect the community from further health risks from climate change. The establishment of a national taskforce on climate and health would be a good first step to developing this plan.”

In its 2009 report, ‘Protecting health from climate change’, the World Health Organisation called for human health to be at the heart of all environment and development decisions. This included a reminder that human health depends on the natural environment not only for the ‘goods and services’ it provides but that it underpins all economic activity, and life itself.

“The health of the community is already at risk from climate change,” Ms Armstrong said. “This risk will continue to grow if strong action is not taken to reduce emissions and halt the increase in atmospheric pollution that is causing global temperature rises and driving climate change right now.”

The Alliance emphasised that policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have the potential to bring important public health benefits.

“Actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will not only reduce climate risk and environmental harm, but will also improve health outcomes and reduce health costs.”

For more information contact: Fiona Armstrong on 0438900005.