

# Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)

**MEDIA RELEASE (for immediate release)**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

## **Guide to boost climate literacy welcomed – clearly needed in Canberra**

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) has welcomed the release of a guide on the science of climate change this week by the Australian Academy of Science, produced by leading climate change scientists.

“The Alliance recognises that despite the overwhelming scientific and observed evidence of climate change there is a poor level of literacy on the science of climate change in the Australian community,” CAHA spokesperson, Fiona Armstrong said.

This is a cause of concern to the newly formed alliance of health sector groups, who are aware of the profound risks and consequences of climate change to the health of the Australian and global population.

The alliance has formed as a way for the health sector to advocate for urgent policy action on climate change and to raise awareness within the sector about the implications of unmitigated global warming.

Decades of research has now informed thousands of reports by august scientific bodies, including Australia’s CSIRO, NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, the US National Academy of Sciences, and the Tyndall Centre in the UK which all draw the same conclusions: left unchecked, global warming poses grave risks to human health and biodiversity, and left unchecked, threatens the future of human civilisation.

The alliance has also noted recent research from the [University of Queensland](#) which demonstrates there are poor levels of climate literacy among many politicians, with understanding considerably varied between the political parties.

These results showed 98% of Greens politicians understood the science of climate change, compared to 89% of Labor politicians and just 38% of Coalition politicians.

“The poor understanding of climate change among many politicians should be a matter of grave concern to voters in this Saturday’s federal election,” Ms Armstrong said.

“The decision to act on climate change, or not to act, which is itself a decision, being made by members of the Australian parliament has profound implications for human health and well-being,” Ms Armstrong said. “That so many of those decision makers are failing to inform themselves of the underlying science, or are choosing to ignore it, is alarming and should be carefully considered in voter’s decisions about their choice of candidates in this Saturday’s federal election.”

“The Australian community is already feeling the effects of climate change from bushfires, heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms,” Ms Armstrong said. “These will increase in frequency and severity with further global warming. The health sector is already being forced to confront the associated physical and mental health problems. CAHA urges our political leaders to commit to strong policy action on climate change to protect human health before we reach irreversible climate tipping points, beyond which our actions may be futile.”

The [Australian Academy of Science guide](#) reiterates what is already widely known and accepted about the role of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere: that increasing levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, driven primarily by human activity, is causing higher mean global surface temperatures. It reiterates that atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is now at the highest level seen in the past 800,000 years. It acknowledges that this increase is already harmful to humans and the ecosystems on which humans depend. It also reiterates that unless global emissions peak within the next decade, the climate may warm beyond the 2°C guardrail, widely considered to be point beyond which the majority of people and species will be adversely affected and beyond the adaptive capacity of many societies and species.

**For more information contact CAHA spokesperson: Fiona Armstrong on 0438900005.**