

Global health peak body supports proposed Climate Change Bill 2020

Melbourne, 14 February, 2020: The beginning of 2020 has shown in quite a terrifying fashion that the changing climate and health are inextricably linked.

The Executive of Australia's peak global health body, representing 48 organisations, the [Global Health Alliance Australia](#) has just met, and were inspired and energised to read the proposed Climate Change Bill - introduced by Independent Member of Parliament, Zali Stegall and supported by other cross-benchers.

If supported, the legislation would enable the findings and recommendations in our landmark report, [From Townsville to Tuvalu: health a climate change in Australia and the Asia Pacific region](#), to be acted upon.

Chair of the Global Health Alliance Australia Professor Jane den Hollander said: "Last year we synthesised 112 pieces of work to draw out just a dozen of the pathways between climate change and adverse human health outcomes for people across the region."

"This proposed Bill gives us optimism that action could be taken to avert the deaths and disease that we demonstrated are already occurring."

Global Health Alliance Executive Director Misha Coleman said: "I'm so pleased to see that the Bill proposes the application of a climate change impact 'lens' on all Commonwealth public service decision-making: ensuring that the potential risks and economic, environmental, health and other social impacts of decisions are analysed and understood across all sectors of the economy."

"This Bill – if enacted - would also give us an accurate assessment of the direct costs of climate change including the increased health, migration and security costs and the expected damage to property and infrastructure.

"As a country, we can't budget responsibly without knowing these costs, but we do know that prevention costs less than a cure."

The Alliance's report in 2019 identifies three areas in which climate change will have a major impact: on political, economic and health systems; on the risk of disease, and on populations that are already under pressure, such as Indigenous Australians and Pacific Islanders.

The report includes pathways between climate change and health we know about including the relationship between rising temperatures and food-borne diseases; new diseases appearing in Australia and lower IQ in babies born to mothers who experience extreme weather events during their pregnancy.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

MEDIA CONTACT

Ranya Alkadamani

Ranya@impactgroupinternational.com

0434 664 589

Available for interview:

1. Professor Jane den Hollander, Chair of the Global Health Alliance Australia
2. Professor Jane Fisher, Deputy Chair of the Global Health Alliance Australia
3. Misha Coleman, Executive Director of the Global Health Alliance Australia

About the Global Health Alliance Australia

The Global Health Alliance Australia, based in Melbourne, was established by global health leaders to coordinate and create partnerships between organisations that work towards achieving health equity. The Alliance currently has 48 member organisations and fosters partnerships between these members which include universities, medical research institutes, WHO Collaborating Centres and international non-government organisations (INGOs). Through partnerships and collaboration, our member organisations encourage and support health equity and health security in our region, utilising and promoting the institutional and disciplinary expertise of our members and sponsors.

Examples of Australian Impacts Outlined in the 2019 Report

The report can be downloaded here: <http://glham.org/from-townsville-to-tuvalu/>

- Rising temperatures can cause and increase in enteric diseases, especially salmonellosis. Such food-borne diseases already have widespread impact on Australia's economy and population health. For example, one study estimated that there were 5.4 million cases of food-borne disease across Australia in 2000, costing the economy \$1.25 billion that year.
- Heat-related illnesses are also expected to rise as our climate continues to warm, which has been estimated to cost the Australian economy \$8.7 billion each year.
- Rising temperatures will play a role in increasing childhood obesity. By-products of fossil fuels produce endocrine-disrupting chemicals that modify the microbial content of the gut, changing the precursors of adipocytes (fat-storing cells) during foetal development. increasing the likelihood of obesity after birth. Obesity is significant cause of diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, heart attack, cancer and stroke, among other illnesses.
- A study of 141 countries shows that women are at a higher risk of death from natural disasters because women are more likely to be inside their homes caring for their children. For example, between 70-80% of the people who died in the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami were women.
- Diseases that are not yet in Australia will spread. Nipah, a bat-borne virus which causes disease in pigs and can be fatal, particularly in humans. Fruit bats in Southeast Asia and Timor Leste, have been



shown to have antibodies to this virus and modelling shows that Northern Australia will be increasingly at-risk of this deadly virus becoming established.