

Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)

MEDIA RELEASE (for immediate release)

11th August 2010

Health debate fails to address major health threat: climate change

The Climate and Health Alliance has expressed its disappointment in the failure of the major parties to acknowledge the risks posed to human health by climate change in the national press club health debate today.

Alliance spokesperson Fiona Armstrong said there was no acknowledgement by either the federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon or Shadow Minister Peter Dutton of the biggest global health threat of the 21st century – climate change – in the health debate.

“Further global warming poses grave risks to human health and biodiversity, and left unchecked, threatens the future of human civilisation. It is quite staggering that our political health leaders could ignore this as a priority human health issue.”

Ms Armstrong said the formation of the Alliance demonstrated the level of concern in civil society that our political leaders were failing to take responsibility on the issue of climate change and ecological degradation.

Ms Armstrong said as a coalition of health leaders, the alliance recognised a particular responsibility to the community in advocating for public policy that promotes and protects human health.

“There is an important role for civil society in helping to fill this leadership vacuum. Through this alliance, we are demonstrating the willingness and ability of civil society to assume leadership by advocating on this issue.”

“It is sobering to note that the influential UK environmental think tank, the Green Alliance, warned prior to their recent election that the 2010 parliament may be the last in which effective action could be taken to stop runaway climate change. This is because changes are non-linear and there is an increasing likelihood that we will soon reach tipping points beyond which changes to the earth’s systems may be irreversible.”

The Climate and Health Alliance wishes to convey the same sense of urgency to all policy-makers in Australia to address climate change.

“Climate change is affecting people’s health right now. However there is a demonstrable lack of leadership in the Australian Parliament to make the hard decisions, stand up to vested interests, and to act in the national interest as we face this unprecedented global challenge,” Ms Armstrong said.

“We need to protect our economic future by moving away from our dependence on fossil fuels and making a large scale transition to safer, cleaner, renewable energy. We need a

Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)

national plan to guide this transition to a greener economy, and this must include careful planning to safeguard the health of the community.”

For more information contact: Fiona Armstrong on 0438900005.