



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Call for carbon emission funds to improve ecology, health

The Rudd Government has been urged to invest at least 20 per cent of the revenue raised through the sale of permits from the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in improving the environment and the health of rural communities.

In a joint submission, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) propose the establishment of two funds, a National Biodiversity and Climate Change Fund and a National Rural Public Health Fund, to help make country communities and environments more resilient to climate change.

The Executive Directors of the two organisations have urged the Prime Minister to recognise the major contribution rural, regional and remote Australia can make towards reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. They are convinced this will bring significant benefits to rural communities and rural health.

"Some of our great natural areas, like the Great Barrier Reef, the wet tropical rainforests and Kakadu, are at high risk from climate change," said ACF executive director Don Henry.

"Investing in better protection and management of Australia's natural areas will also help protect the hundreds of thousands of jobs and the billions of dollars they generate through tourism."

NRHA Chair, Jenny May, said a National Rural Public Health Fund would help exposed rural and remote economies and health systems to prepare for the challenge of climate change.

"It would provide resources for training, infrastructure, services and programs that promote healthy activities and illness prevention. The combination of environmental and health benefits that would flow from these efforts is what has brought our two organisations together on this critical current issue," Dr May said.

The Garnaut Review estimated that up to 250 million tonnes of carbon dioxide could be absorbed in native vegetation and soil across 70 per cent of the country's grazing lands each year – amounting to almost half Australia's total annual greenhouse gas emissions.

The two organisations are asking the Prime Minister to develop these funds along the lines of the Clean Energy and Security Act 2009 recently passed by the US House of Representatives.

Their joint submission details how these investments in public health would increase the sustainability of Australia's rural and remote communities, through the creation of economic activity and more directly through the health and productivity of the seven million people who live in them.

Further information:

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