



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Health risks of global climate change

The NRHA welcomes the Climate Commission's documentation of the health risks from climate change.

The Climate Commission is an independent body set up to provide a reliable and authoritative source of information on climate change, and to help inform the debate on the issue.

Among other things, global climate change induced by human activity is increasing the incidence of severe weather events (including heatwaves) and changing the distribution of diseases that are related to environmental factors. At the global level, as well as within rural Australia, climate change will lead to significant population displacement and put increasing pressure on already overburdened health services and infrastructure.

Such issues make climate change a serious public health challenge for Australia and the release of today's report by the Climate Commission provides strong evidence of the dynamics of these effects.

"Given the extent to which it will affect communities in rural and remote areas, unmitigated climate change has the capacity to increase the gap between rural and metropolitan health status," said Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the National Rural Health Alliance.

"On the other hand, with active planning and as relative prices change, it's also true that the majority of new economic opportunities will be in rural areas."

The Report points out that the elderly, the young, those with chronic illness, those in lower socio-economic groups and Indigenous communities are particularly at risk. An effective public health response to climate change is essential to preventing injuries and illnesses, enhancing public health preparedness and reducing risk. This is the critical decade for action, and health professionals have an important role to play.

Australia needs to prepare for some of the inevitable impacts on human health while supporting action to prevent further adverse effects by reducing greenhouse emissions.

The Alliance will continue to work with communities and governments to ensure that people in rural and remote Australia are aware of the risks of climate change for their health and the health of their community.

Contacts

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