



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator Penny Wong
Minister for Climate Change and Water

The Hon Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

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WORLD HEALTH DAY 2008 – PROTECTING HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

The effect of climate change on human health was an important motivator for the Australian Government's decisive action on the issue, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, said today.

Tomorrow is World Health Day 2008, with the World Health Organization theme of 'Protecting health from climate change'.

"Climate change affects our environment which in turn can have a huge impact on our health," Senator Wong said.

"That's why the Rudd Government has acted quickly to tackle climate change.

"The first act of the Rudd Government was to ratify Kyoto and our policies – including our drive to ensure 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply is from renewable energy by 2020 – have us on track to meet our Kyoto target.

"In addition, we have announced a timetable for introducing a national greenhouse gas emissions trading scheme by 2010.

"The Rudd Government aims to reduce Australia's emissions by 60 per cent by 2050."

Senator Wong said the Government was working with State and Territory governments to develop a plan for measuring the effects of climate change – including on human health – so informed decisions could be made about managing its impacts.

Ms Roxon said the Government was committed to sweeping reforms of the health system to meet the challenges of the future such as those posed by climate change.

"Southern states have recently experienced extreme heatwave conditions, which can be serious for frail older people and for children," Ms Roxon said.

"And while some communities in Queensland and NSW recently battled extreme wet conditions and the disease threats posed by flooding, many other communities in rural and regional areas remain in the grip of prolonged drought, making the provision of mental health and other social services vital."

The Australian Government has already taken important steps to reform Australia's health system and improve health around Australia, including:

- An increase in Commonwealth funding for public hospitals of \$1 billion in 2008-09.
- \$150 million to slash waiting lists for elective surgery;
- the provision of up to 50,000 additional health vocational training places over three years, covering nurses, dental health workers, allied health assistants, ambulance officers, and Aboriginal health workers.