



*Public Health Association
of New Zealand Inc.*

**CLIMATE CHANGE HAS DIRE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS, WARNS PHA
Media release, 31 October 2006**

Increases in illness and death from malaria, dengue fever, injuries, and heat stress are some of the implications of climate change, warns the Public Health Association (PHA).

Commenting on the climate change report by former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern, PHA Director Dr Gay Keating said the health impacts of global warming needed to be considered alongside economic and environmental fallout.

“Climate change affects health in a number of ways, including the impact of higher temperatures, and the increase in injury, illness and death caused by extreme weather such as floods and storms.

“It also has significant indirect health effects, such as an increase in the transmission of infectious diseases such as malaria and dengue fever as insects carrying diseases travel further south.”

She said more frequent and severe heat waves and humidity could lead to increases in smog and air pollution.

“Increases in pollens and mold spores would compound the situation and affect those with cardiovascular disease, respiratory disorders such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, and allergy problems. Trees and other vegetation that give rise to allergenic pollens grow more profusely in a warmer climate. When combined with smog and other atmospheric

pollutants, illness from allergic respiratory disease, particularly asthma, could increase.”

The World Health Organization estimates that 160,000 deaths a year are caused by climate change.

Dr Keating said that it was vital countries did everything they could to address global warming.

“We now know that climate change is occurring. The severity and frequency of recent storms around the world is just one of the signs. The Kyoto agreement must be supported, and targets met, if we are to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate change on human life and health now and into the future.

“All countries must reduce their emissions, which, through global climate change, pose a critical threat to our health and to the planet.”

For further information:

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The Public Health Association of New Zealand is a non-party political voluntary association, which provides a major forum for the exchange of information and stimulation of debate about public health in New Zealand.