

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Government research funding for a healthy planet

\$10 million of new government funding announced today provides a vital step towards addressing targeted research priorities identified in 2007 in Research Australia's report *Healthy Planet, Places and People*.

"The health impacts of climate change are potentially huge and there are real gaps in our understanding of how to respond," said Rebecca James, CEO of Research Australia.

Twelve of Australia's top health and medical researchers contributed to the *Healthy Planet* report, which concluded that rapid environmental and climatic changes pose increasing risks to the health of Australians. These include:

- Deaths from heart attacks, strokes and respiratory disease, from increases in heatwaves, could double or triple by 2050;
- Asthma is likely to increase in some groups;
- The incidence and geographic range of some mosquito-borne diseases will increase;
- Food poisoning – with 5.4 million cases reported each year – is also likely to rise;
- Viral infections such as avian flu and SARS will spread more readily as population density, people movement, trade and land clearing increase.

The government's new strategy, *Human Health and Climate Change - a National Adaptation Research Plan*, addresses issues raised by Research Australia, including extreme weather, vector-borne disease, mental health and health care provision.

"The community response when we published *Healthy Planet* was striking. Our 2007 Public Opinion Poll found that almost half the community believe that environmental problems have affected their health," said Ms James.

"There is a real need to predict and pre-empt the health impacts of climate change. Continued investment in Australia's world-leading health and medical research will help us respond to these emerging challenges."

*Healthy Planet, Places and People* is available from [www.researchaustralia.org](http://www.researchaustralia.org)

#### About Research Australia

Research Australia is a unique national alliance of over 170 member and donor organisations with a common mission to make health and medical research a higher national priority. For more information on Research Australia visit [www.researchaustralia.org](http://www.researchaustralia.org)

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