

## **Annual Report of Doctors for the Environment, Australia. 2005-2006**

This year has seen a successful expansion of our educational role and increasingly this has been in relation to climate change and its existing and predicted effects on human health and wellbeing. The health implications are enormous and we feel that our concentration on these is a potent way of bringing climate change to the attention of both government and community. Therefore despite the many environmental health problems besetting us, we have concentrated on climate change and health because we believe this is the greatest and most urgent problem facing humanity. Within this remit we have involved ourselves in energy policy and in the national debate on nuclear energy.

### **Education**

In 2005, DEA was awarded its first competitive grant---- from the Federal Environmental Education Research Grant Scheme. Our successful proposal entitled "Community environmental education using human health messages", explained that the medical profession regularly uses health messages to promote good health and a healthy lifestyle. To improve the community's understanding of major environmental issues, we developed two posters and leaflets on biodiversity and climate change that linked human and environmental health. These were for display in doctors waiting rooms and were targeted at adults. The basis for this method of delivery was that approximately 80% of the community visits a general practitioner at least once a year. This large captive audience is representative of the adult population and usually has 'waiting time' to absorb the health messages on display. The posters and pamphlets can be viewed on [www.healthyplanet.info](http://www.healthyplanet.info)

The initial run of 300 posters was advertised to the DEA membership and to non members through newsletters. There was a take up of all posters within a few days and a simultaneous media release attracted a number of interviews, some of them lengthy. Feedback from patients was sought through a competition for a mountain bike. As a result information and suggestions have enabled us to modify the posters.

We also recognise that the project had an educative role for the doctors and others working in the practices.

The completion of this project fulfilled our commitment to the Department of Environment and Heritage. After modification of the posters plans are now in hand for a distribution to general practitioners nationwide. We anticipate using funds from the appeal to members for this important initiative

### **Meeting with the Hon Anthony Albanese Shadow Minister for the Environment,**

This meeting with our representatives took place in Canberra on June 1, 2006. It is not our policy to report on the discussions that took place, but with all Ministers and Politicians it is fair to say that we present material defined in our policies and use scientific and medical data to explain issues and indicate where they might become part of policy. We will retain contact with his office.

We have continued our briefing of Members of Parliament on current environmental issues that have significant implications for health. Over the year we have met a number of Federal and State Ministers, Members and Senators.

## **Policy Development**

“An Energy Policy for Australia” was prepared in response to discussion and suggestions at the 2005 AGM. This is a large document which reviews all modalities of energy production and their relevance to a sustainable future. There is emphasis on nuclear energy and on the health aspects of all modalities. The policy was released in August and the press release and full policy is available on [www.dea.org.au](http://www.dea.org.au)

## **State Committees, News from Western Australia**

There is a local State subcommittee of 5 members who communicate mostly by phone or email (principally because the Chair, Bill Castleden, lives about 4 hours South-West of the Perth metropolitan area), One of the WA subcommittee, Dr. John Stokes, nominated for the task of Treasurer of DEA from November 2006, and as treasurer will become a member of the management committee of DEA. The WA committee communicates with the other members through 3 –monthly newsletters, and occasional brief communications about State environmental matters of importance. Various submissions to state agencies and authorities have been prepared on individual rather than a DEA-sponsored basis, although this may change in future

WA now has 85 members. The membership held its first social get-together and dinner on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2006 with a 50 minute presentation by Dr Ray Wills, a scientist with expertise in the implications of climate change. 22 members, many with their spouses and/or partners attended together with 3 other interested doctors, two of whom have subsequently joined DEA.

## **Submissions to Parliamentary Committees etc**

(1) Submission to NICNAS (National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme [www.nicnas.gov.au](http://www.nicnas.gov.au)). NICNAS is the National Chemicals Regulator with a broad coverage of chemicals including cosmetics, paints, solvents and plastics. Clearly there are significant health issues in this role. NICNAS was under review in 2006 and DEA made a submission.

(2) Submission to the Federal Government's Uranium Mining processing and nuclear energy review (UMPNER) This submission detailed the health concerns in relation to any expansion of the nuclear industry.

The submission is available on [www.dea.org.au](http://www.dea.org.au) and on <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/umpner/submissions.cfm#org>

(3) Submission to Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter, House of Representative Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage, written by Dr Colin Butler

## **Financial matters and appeal for Funds**

The appeal for the DEA Fund was very successful, resulting in the donation of \$19,620.00. The balance of the DEA Cheque Account is \$15,323.76. These bring DEA's current net assets at June 30, 2006 to \$34,972.65, compared to \$11,852.64 at the same time last year.

## **Publications**

Blashki, G., Butler, C.D., and Brown, S. (2006 in press). Climate change and human health- what can GPs do? Australian Family Physician 35(10)

Grant Blashki "Going Green" in "Australian Doctor.com.au" 19.07.06; (excellent article deserves wider distribution)

Bill Castleden."A Healthy Body and a Healthy Mind" Malleefowl News, Vol. 39.March 2006 p4

Bill Castleden "Environmental Doctors" The Augusta-Margaret River Mail 20.09.06 p 14,

Bill Castleden Letter in:"Medical Forum WA" May 2006 p3

Bill Castleden, Article in Royal Australian College of Surgeon's Surgical News.

Sian Hughes Consultant Paediatrician; interview by Kay O'Sullivan in "The Age" 22.10.05.

David Shearman "Climate Change, How do we lead the Blind? Article in 'Comment and analysis', The Independent Weekly, June 24-30 2006

Joseph Smith and David Shearman, "Climate Change Litigation. Analysing the law, scientific evidence and impacts on the environment, health and property" Presidian Legal Publications, September 2006

Kathy Calder: Towards human and ecological health and wellbeing; accompanied by one of the Posters. Canberra Doctor, July 2006, Vol 18, No.5, p.14

### **Lectures and Presentations**

Bill Castleden "About DEA" at WA Dinner of Doctors for the Environment Australia 10.06.06

Bill Castleden "Why become involved in Environmental Matters" at Fremantle Hospital Clinical Staff Dinner 15.09.06.

Bill Castleden "A Health Perspective of Climate Change and what Can We Do" Climate Change Conference organised by the Catholic Education office in WA and Catholic Earthcare 11.10.06.

David Shearman "Climate Change - the ultimate challenge in Public Health". Lecture to the SA Branch of Australian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, June 28 2006

### **Media**

#### *Poster project*

Prof Tony. McMichael and Dr. David King gave ten radio interviews between them – talking to local radio stations in Tasmania, Queensland, NSW, SA and WA.

ABC Online reported on the project.

#### *DEA Energy Policy*

Bill Castleden Radio Interviews: Pulse 94.7 FM Geelong. Gary Dalton 24.08.06.

Radio Adelaide 101FM The Wire. 24.08.06, Radio Heart 95.7 FM Tasmania. Ben Hill 29.08.06

### **Bill Castleden, Chair**

**David Shearman, Secretary**

**1.11.06**