

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Climate change will directly impact on infectious diseases in Australia**

Climate change is expected to have a direct impact on infectious diseases in Australia, but can be minimised by forward planning and public health measures, says Dr Timothy Inglis, a medical microbiologist at the QEII Medical Centre in Perth, writing in the latest edition of *Australian Prescriber*.

In the last decade scientists have gained a better understanding of the links between complex weather systems and human disease.

“Some notable correlations between weather systems and specific infectious diseases have already been described, such as the El Niño Southern Oscillation and cholera in Bangladesh,” Dr Inglis writes.

In Australia, studies have shown links between high daytime temperatures, a low UV index, and an increase in the number of children with gastroenteritis.

“A Darwin study found that in mosquito areas, rainfall and warm weather contribute to the incidence of infections spread by mosquitoes. Climate change may increase this,” Dr Inglis says.

“Looking to the future, we can predict that there will be an increase in the number of people at risk of getting dengue fever. For Australia, this means there may be more dengue fever outbreaks in the north, and an extension of the at-risk area.”

“Other mosquito-borne diseases including Ross River virus, Barmah Forest and Kunjin virus infections, and Murray Valley encephalitis are likely to be affected by climate change, but this is difficult to predict for a given geographical area.”

“Climate change-related increases in temperature will increase the risk of food-borne infections such as salmonellosis and listeriosis.”

“Although climate change will probably affect the risk of getting an infectious disease, we cannot accurately predict when, where or what diseases will become more common,” Dr Inglis concludes.

For full copies of the editorial visit [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com).

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