Health sector thinking green and global for better health

Media release - 29 August 2013

Health and sustainability professionals will gather in Melbourne tomorrow for a policy think tank to discuss initiatives to promote environmental sustainability in healthcare around the world.

The second annual "Greening the Healthcare Sector' Policy Think Tank is jointly hosted by the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and the Climate and Health Alliance, with supporting partners Global Green and Healthy Hospitals and the Deeble Institute.

This year the Think Tank will be joined by international speakers: Dr Blair Sadler from the University of California San Diego School of Medicine and School of Management, USA and Josh Karliner from the international NGO Health Care Without Harm.

Dr Sadler welcomed the opportunity to share progress from the US Healthier Hospitals Initiative with Australian audiences, "We are working to embed a broad sustainability agenda in the DNA of healthcare delivery in the United States. There are already some incredible accomplishments from this program, which is available at no cost, with millions of pounds of materials recycled and over $32 million in savings from single-use medical device reprocessing. I'm also looking forward to hearing about activities in Australia and sharing them with colleagues in the US."

While the major parties have been silent on the relationships between climate change and health and the health system, the Greens have acknowledged the important role that the health system can play in climate action. The Greens Health policy released yesterday included the establishment of a Health Sustainability Unit and Senator Richard di Natale will attend to present on 'Sustainable healthcare through a political lens: challenges and opportunities'.

Selected speaker sessions will also be broadcast via the internet to a global audience.

Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association CEO Alison Verhoeven said "We are very pleased to be part of promoting the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network that is helping hospitals and healthcare systems around the world become more sustainable. By doing so, hospital and health providers can reduce expenditure, improve the health of their staff and the community. We encourage all health care settings to join this global network to accelerate our progress towards sustainable, healthy, healthcare."

Climate and Health Alliance Convenor Fiona Armstrong said the opportunities for collaboration among individuals and institutions working on sustainable healthcare initiatives were greatly enhanced by innovative new communication platforms such as Global Green and Healthy Hospitals *Connect*.

"A number of Australian hospitals are already taking advantage of this great opportunity to be part of the global network, to share their progress with others and help work through the challenges involved in implementing a sustainability agenda. The stories from people working around the world to 'green the sector" are inspiring others, and we look forward to seeing that spread across the health sector here in Australia".

Media contacts – for comment and to arrange interviews with presenters:
Alison Verhoeven, Chief Executive, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association 0403 282 501
Fiona Armstrong, Convenor, Climate and Health Alliance 0438 900 005

http://ahha.asn.au/event/greening-health-sector-policy-think-tank-0