
Australian Science Media Centre – Embargoed to 6 pm AEST 6 April, 2007

Potential impacts

- 2020
- Heat-related deaths in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Brisbane likely to rise from 1115 at present to 2300-2500 per year
- 2050
- Heat-related deaths in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Brisbane likely to rise from 1115 at present to 4300-6300 per year
 - Winter peak in deaths is likely to be overtaken by heat-related deaths in nearly all cities
 - The annual number of diarrhoeal hospital admissions among Aboriginal children living in central Australia is likely to increase 10% by 2050, assuming no change in current health standards
- 2100
- Australian annual death rate in people aged over 65 is estimated to increase from a 1999 baseline of 82 per 100,000 to 131-246 per 100,000

Mosquito-borne disease

The changing climate is likely to have an impact on the geographic range and breeding cycles of mosquitoes. Combined with demographic changes in Australia, there may be changes in the extent of mosquito-borne disease.

Ross River disease: There is likely to be an increase in the variability in annual rates of Ross River disease, particularly in temperate and semi-arid areas.

Dengue fever: The far north of Australia already supports the mosquito that carries the dengue virus. Projected climate changes in north-eastern Australia, combined with population growth, are likely to increase the average annual number of people living in areas suitable for supporting the dengue vector (an additional 0.1-0.3 million exposed in 2020, and 0.6-1.4 million in 2050).

Malaria: is unlikely to establish unless there is a dramatic deterioration in the public health response.

Other health impacts

Warmer temperatures and increased rainfall variability are likely to increase the intensity and frequency of food- and water-borne diseases.

Indigenous people living in remote communities are likely to be at increased risk due to their particular living conditions and poor access to services.

The relationship between drought, suicide and severe mental health impacts in rural communities suggests that parts of Australia are likely to experience increased mental health risks in future.

Projected increases in fire risk and smoke may lead to more asthma.

Impacts on aeroallergens and photochemical smog in cities remain uncertain.