PHAA urges action on Ebola response

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has released a statement calling on the Australian Government to take further concrete actions to support the World Health Organization (WHO) Ebola Response Roadmap.

“The Ebola virus outbreak was declared a ‘Public Health Emergency of International Concern’ on August 8th, and WHO released an Ebola Response Roadmap on August 28th to guide the international response. It contains a comprehensive range of measures, designed to end the outbreak in 6-9 months and prevent further international spread, at an estimated cost of US $490 million dollars. However, up to this point, the international community, including Australia, has not responded with sufficient resolve to support the affected countries,” said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PHAA.

“We welcome the announcement, made on August 24th, from Hon Julie Bishop MP, Australia’s Foreign Minister, of an extra $1 million to the WHO to support their response. But in light of the escalating crisis, more now needs to be done. I have been in contact with the Hon Catherine King MP, Shadow Minister for Health and Senator Richard Di Natale, Australian Greens Health spokesperson and both are supportive of a non-partisan effort on enhancing Australia’s response to Ebola,” said Mr Moore.

We call on the Australian government to do three things:

1) respond to the UN call by immediately providing more financial assistance, given the magnitude and high cost of the tasks outlined in the Roadmap;

2) actively consider the request from WHO, which has been strongly backed by Médecins Sans Frontières, for the deployment of an AUSMAT (Australian Medical Assistance Team) as part of the strengthening of medical and public health capacity in the region; and

3) support those Australians who have volunteered, and are considering volunteering through international non-government organisations, and WHO, by encouraging employers to provide special leave, continuation of entitlements, and the like.

“In years to come, this crisis will be seen as a turning point in international public health. As the time when we demonstrated that we really do act as a global community, with better off nations supporting those less well off, in a coordinated fashion through the WHO. Or as the time when we looked away, secured our borders, and left those at greatest need to fend for themselves,” said Mr Moore.

PHAA’s full statement on the Ebola Response is available on the PHAA website at: www.phaa.net.au.

For further information/comment: