Ebola: the next steps

PHAA welcomes government action. Hopefully not too little too late.

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the Federal Government’s latest action on Ebola. PHAA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Michael Moore said, “The Government deserves congratulations on working closely with the British Government to find a way to assist Australian health volunteers to pitch in to fight the spread of this awful disease.

“For two months the PHAA has been working with others to bring pressure on the Government to urgently respond to calls from the World Health Organisation and the United Nations to offer assistance in West Africa. Staffing a 100 bed British built treatment centre in Sierra Leone is a massive step forward,” added Mr Moore.

Health Minister Peter Dutton, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and the Prime Minister Tony Abbott need to be appropriately acknowledged for:

- The commitment of an additional $20 million over the next eight months for the treatment facility in Sierra Leone
- Additional funding of $2 million to RedR Australia for technical expertise in front line roles in West Africa
- Ensuring Australian readiness for any cases that come to this country
- The financial contribution of $18 million dollars already committed to the crisis
- Commitment to supporting any need within our region including:
  - using Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMAT) in the region if needed
  - $2 million to train health officials in Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and the Pacific Islands
- Supporting volunteers who are willing to staff the British field hospital in Sierra Leone.

Continue the action

“However, the PHAA has major concerns that although this is a big step forward, this significant contribution may still be too little too late,” added Mr Moore.

The PHAA continues to call on the Australian Government to do the following:

- Provide Australian troops and equipment and other logistical support
- Deploy our Australian Medical Assistance Teams in West Africa
- Directly assemble, train and support appropriately qualified health professionals and other skilled civilians who are ready and waiting to help.

The PHAA supports the statement from the Prime Minister today which explains the risk to Australians, which needs to be kept in perspective: “While Ebola is a serious disease, it is not highly contagious. The risk of an outbreak of Ebola in Australia remains low, including from returning aid workers”.

For further information/comment:
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