

Australian Red Cross Youth Volunteers – Turning up the heat on climate change!

As climate change continues to threaten vulnerable Australians, through heatwaves, extreme weather events and droughts, young South Australians have taken on a key role in advocating for stronger and more resilient communities.

In September last year Australian Red Cross endorsed a Climate Change Adaptation Framework to address the humanitarian impacts of climate change. This was a key milestone in a process that began with the tenacity of the organisation's South Australian Youth Advisory Committee (SAYAC).

Luke Parsons, National Youth Advisory Committee representative for the SAYAC, believed that a big factor motivating this work came from "living in the driest state in the driest inhabited continent in the world." Mr Parsons further added that as a consequence of this fact "the effects of climate change are certain to have a greater impact on the vulnerable of our state. Research suggests that major health impacts are likely to increase, The February 2009 heatwave in Adelaide was responsible for over 500 hospital admissions".

Climate change vulnerability was considered by all SAYAC members to be core business of Red Cross. This connection was demonstrated to decision makers through presentations and discussions. As a result, a State Board Climate Change Working Group was formed.

"Addressing vulnerability both nationally and regionally is central to our work, as Australian Red Cross" said Hannah Skehan, Chair of SAYAC and the Climate Change Working Group. The issues arising regionally (Asia Pacific Region), were considered relevant due to "both their direct and indirect impacts on our national society, through International

Operations and through the potential impact on migration, or the spread of tropical diseases" said Ms Skehan.

The endorsement of the Adaptation Framework by Australian Red Cross marks the beginning of the organisation's involvement with climate change. It is further hoped young people will continue to be involved in implementation of the developing Australian Red Cross Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. "This will be a fantastic opportunity to meaningfully engage and involve young people in Red Cross" said Andrew Boscence the Climate Change and Environment Officer.



Vinay Menon, the National Youth Representative on the Australian Red Cross Board, commented "the incredible work of this passionate group of volunteers in South Australia provides an example to the organization and wider community about what can be achieved by young people... climate change is an area that young people feel strongly about and it is fantastic that Australian Red Cross is beginning to tackle the issue".

"Young people have been catalysts for the success so far and as climate change continues to threaten vulnerable Australians they will have a key role building community adaptive capacity" said Kerry Symons Executive Director of Red Cross in South Australia.

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Published June 2009 on www.climatecentre.org



**YOUTH: MAKING A MOVE
ON CLIMATE CHANGE.**

