

To Mark Butler etc

As the inauguration of the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) is imminent, I write on behalf of DEA Tasmania, to congratulate the current Government, and especially, you as health minister, on this achievement.

We acknowledge that the ACDC's functions will encompass "public health matters", defined as health emergency management, health security, health protection, disease prevention and control, environmental health and the health effects of climate change.

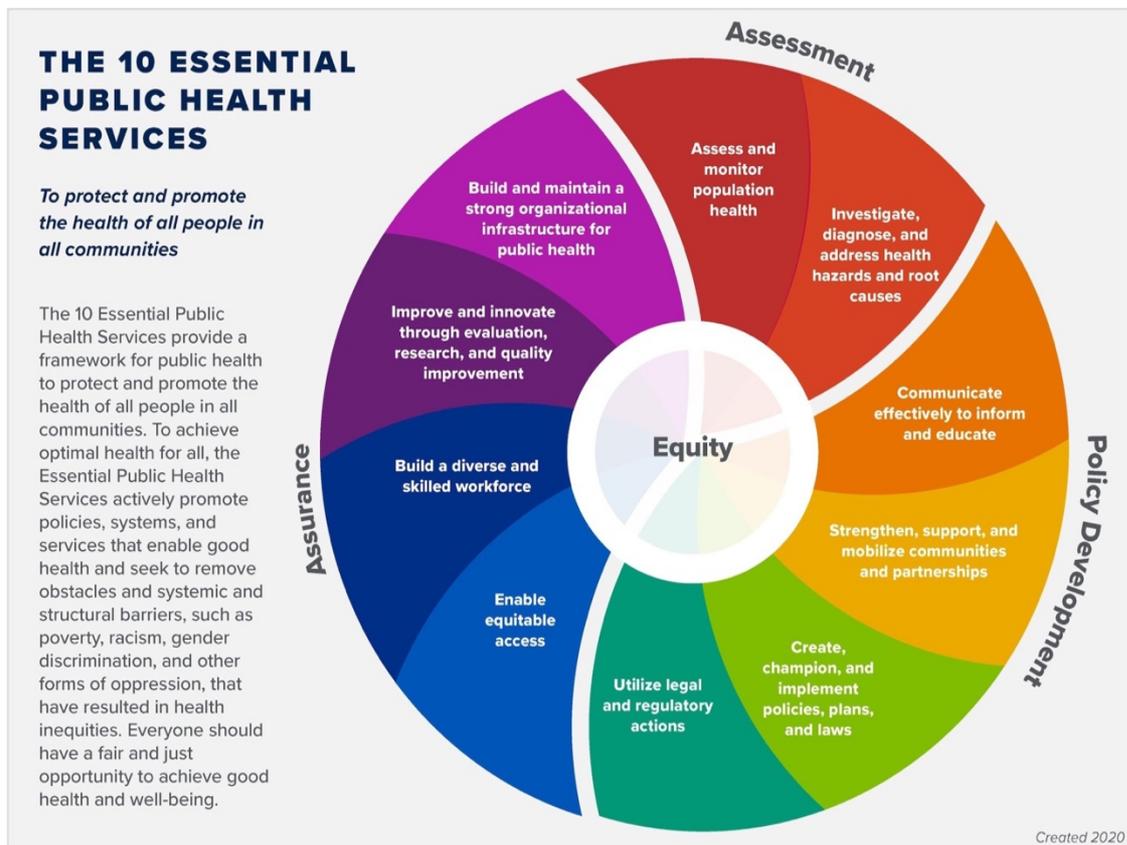
We also recognise that the Government is supporting the National Health and Climate Strategy and that the national and most, if not all, state Public Health Departments have specialists leading on sustainability and climate change, supporting the Strategy and developing local plans.*However, their focus is on the Health Service response rather than multi-causal climate change and the combination of interventions and adaptations necessary. They will look to the ACDC for a lead on the true public/population health risks of climate change.

As stated, when the Australian CDC was mooted, Australia will learn from existing CDCs.

The purpose of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the current version of a national CDC, is to prevent, prepare for and respond to infectious diseases and environmental hazards. It provides scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability. It is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care but independent of it. It now includes the Centre for Climate and Health Security. However, the current UK Health Security Agency is the fourth name change of the national centre since its inception almost 60 years ago. Changing its name and focus, from CDSC to Health Protection Agency, to Public Health England (and devolved administrations) and now the UK Health Security Agency has caused confusion for the population and certainly not created trust and stability of Public Health.

Unfortunately, the long-established and trusted US CDC is now under serious threat from the second Trump Government. The US CDC has been recognised globally for delivering a programmed approach to multidisciplinary and multiagency action on the public health, including environmental health and climate change, fitting within

its Wheel of Action.



The Canadian CDC includes both infectious and non-infectious diseases. The European CDC focuses on infectious diseases only, but is supported by a strong Environment Protection Agency, which is not the case for Australia.

The recent review of Australia's COVID-19 response and the Lancet Climate Change Countdown report strengthened Australia's commitment to an Australian CDC by 2026 but suggested broadening its remit to include non-communicable as well as communicable disease, integrating climate resilience into its Public Health and environmental strategies at national and local levels. Certainly, an analysis of preparation for future outbreaks, pandemics or other disasters shows there are gaps to be filled in future plans.

As the threat of climate change becomes more urgent, and associated extreme weather events more frequent around the world, action on the health effects of climate change should be made a central responsibility of the Australian CDC, working with named individuals in every Public Health department, to design and coordinate evidence-based interventions, appropriate research and evaluation and to demonstrate the cost benefit of these.

Now is a one-time opportunity to include the health effects of climate change as a true determinant of health which, together with a disease prevention approach would improve the public/population health.

We, doctors working on disease control and environmental sustainability, recommend that you will broaden the remit for the ACDC to include the health effects of climate change and the environmental aspects of health inequalities.

To re-establish confidence in the Public Health, it is important to ensure stability from its outset and to clarify the strategic, policy and executive powers of the NationalACDC and national and local Departments of Public Health. Of course, an independent review of the new CDC will be essential

We hope that you will consider our comments as you move forward to establish the first ACDC and set it up for success.