



For Immediate Release  
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## **Foreign Donations bill will make Victorians sick!**

In Federal parliamentary hearings in Melbourne today, the Global Health Alliance – a partnership of organisations working in global health – warned that new foreign donation laws could compromise crucial international medical research partnerships and health promotion work.

Executive Director, Mischa Coleman, told the Committee that the health of Victorians could be put at risk. “Under this Bill, Australian scientists who get international philanthropic funds for their work may not be able to use those funds to tell the public about their findings,” Coleman said.

Speaking with Federal MPs, Coleman gave the example of an outbreak of flesh-eating bacteria, which occurs on the Mornington and Frankston Peninsulas in Victoria and is particularly prevalent during summer season when tourist numbers are at their peak.

“Scientists researching this bacteria are funded through international donations. Under this Bill, their public statements on the health risks would be categorised as ‘political’ and consequently captured in its broad definition. We would be in an absurd situation where warning the public would make scientists liable for criminal penalties.

“Victorians will be at greater risk of disease and death if this Bill goes through in its current form.”

The Alliance expressed its concerns that future funding from philanthropic foundations including the Wellcome Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will be compromised under the proposed legislation.

“These foundations support public and private Australian organisations to carry out research, run public awareness campaigns and lobby MPs for policy change in relation to public health issues such as asbestos, smoking and sugar. This is of public benefit and we do not want to see this lost.”

The Alliance has called for the Bill to be redrafted to ensure that health promotion and the advocacy related to medical research findings be exempted.

Coleman added: “the Bill needs to be very significantly redrafted”.

### **ENDS**

#### **Media Contact**

Misha Coleman, Executive Director of Global Health Alliance Melbourne, 0428 399 739

#### **Notes to Editors**

The Alliance is a peak body for organisations who work in global health, listed overleaf, and is chaired by the Hon. John Brumby AO. The full submission is available at <http://glham.org/wp-content/uploads/GLHAM-SubmissionJSCEM.pdf>.

The **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters** is currently taking evidence on the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017.

Member Organisations



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| <br>ADARA GROUP<br>- BRIDGING WORLDS -   | <br>the power of humanity<br>AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS           | <br>Australian Rotary Health Research Fund              | <br>BioMelbourne Network<br>Progressing BioIndustry            |
| <br>Burnet Institute<br>Medical Research. Practical Action.                              | <br>CAPITAL COLLABORATION                                   | <br>CPHR<br>CENTRE FOR POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH       | <br>CLINTON HEALTH ACCESS INITIATIVE                           |
| <br>DEAKIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA  | <br>Doherty Institute                                     | <br>The Fred Hollows Foundation<br>www.hollows.org.au | <br>GCEID<br>GEELONG CENTRE FOR EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES |
| <br>The George Institute for Global Health<br>10 Years of impact in Clinics and Trials | <br>GLOBAL IDEAS  | <br>HDR   | <br>MONASH University  |
| <br>Medicines Development for Global Health  | <br>MARIE STOPES INTERNATIONAL                            | <br>Murdoch Childrens Research Institute              | <br>THE NOSSAL INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH                   |
| <br>OXFAM Australia  | <br>QPS<br>CENTRE FOR QUALITY AND PATIENT SAFETY RESEARCH | <br>Rotary  | <br>Save the Children.                                       |
| <br>SEED<br>CENTRE FOR SOCIAL AND EARLY EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT                          | <br>THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE                           | <br>VISION 2020<br>THE RIGHT TO SIGHT AUSTRALIA       |   |