

The Hon. Alexander Downer MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Downer,

### **Lebanon Israeli War**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is a forum for the promotion of the health of the public as well as being a professional resource for public health personnel. The Association provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on public health and actively undertakes advocacy for public health policy, development, research and training.

The PHAA has over past years discussed war and its impact on civilian populations. It is our belief that the acts of war and armed conflict are the greatest calamities for people's health because war always takes resources away from other priorities and continues to do so after the war has ceased. War leads to increased rates of disease, death, injury, psychological damage, lifelong disabilities and transgenerational trauma.

Members of PHAA are deeply alarmed at the situation that has developed in Lebanon and Israel over the past weeks. We are concerned about the level of human suffering, in particular that of civilian populations in both countries.

The PHAA does not pretend to have a solution to this situation, rather we encourage you and the Prime Minister to urgently advocate and promote a cease fire. We acknowledge that the situation is complex and that it would be difficult to determine the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of the conflict and the political history that has led to it.

However, we believe that the Australian Government should actively champion a process for negotiations to bring about a ceasefire with other nations and support the United Nations call for a cease fire. We also request that the Australian Government arrange for humanitarian assistance to be provided to civilian populations in both countries on the basis of need.

I would be happy to discuss these issues with you or your staff should you think that would be useful. I can be contacted on (02) 62852373 or at [plaut@phaa.net.au](mailto:plaut@phaa.net.au)

Yours sincerely,

Pieta-Rae Laut  
Executive Director  
10.8.08