



National Health and Climate Strategy



People in Australia are already experiencing the impacts of climate change on their health. There is an urgent need to build community and health system resilience to the impacts of this climate emergency on human health and wellbeing. The health system also generates greenhouse gas emissions in the delivery of care.

Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy sets out a whole-of-government plan for addressing the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change. It also addresses the contribution of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the health system – encompassing public and preventive health, primary and secondary health care, and aged care – to climate change. The Strategy identifies actions over five years, as well as laying out an ongoing programme of work that will continue in the decades to come.

The Strategy's vision is 'Healthy, climate-resilient communities, and a sustainable, resilient, high-quality, net zero health system'.

OBJECTIVE 1 Health system resilience



Build a climate-resilient health system and enhance its capacity to protect health and wellbeing from the impacts of climate change.

The Strategy will inform and guide action by the health system to protect and promote population health while adapting to the impacts of climate change.

OBJECTIVE 2 Health system decarbonisation



Build a sustainable, high quality, net zero health system.

The Strategy will guide the development of a plan to decarbonise the Australian health system, informed by a comprehensive assessment of the emissions footprint of the Australian health system and existing state and territory strategies and plans.

OBJECTIVE 3 International collaboration



Collaborate internationally to build sustainable, climate-resilient health systems and communities.

The Strategy will identify opportunities for knowledge sharing and the development of international standards as well as highlight the ways Australia can support its neighbours to protect and promote health in their climate change responses.

OBJECTIVE 4 Health in all policies



Support healthy, climate-resilient and sustainable communities through whole-of-government action which recognises the relationship between health and climate outcomes.

The Strategy adopts a Health in All Policies approach by promoting the health co-benefits of emissions reductions across society and adaptation action beyond the health system to protect health and wellbeing from climate change.

CONSULTATION

The diverse views, ideas and experiences of stakeholders and the community have been a vital input into developing this Strategy. The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care undertook a range of stakeholder engagement activities, including face-to-face and online consultation workshops and Ministerial roundtables.

Overview



270

Submissions received

300+

STAKEHOLDERS participated in workshops



4 Virtual workshops

including First Nations, aged care and primary care sector



12

Face-to-face workshops



PRINCIPLES

The Strategy is informed throughout by five interlinked principles which promote evidence-informed and culturally safe action. The principles link human health and the environment, support climate justice and uphold the leadership, strength, and wisdom of First Nations people.

PRINCIPLE 1: Health Equity and the Right to Health

Health is a fundamental human right that is undermined by climate change. Some populations are more susceptible to and have less capacity to adapt to the health impacts of climate change. Responses to climate change need to take account of disparities in health outcomes through strengths-based approaches.

PRINCIPLE 2: One Health and Planetary Health

One Health and Planetary Health recognise thriving ecosystems as essential conditions for human health and the need to regenerate planetary health to create a healthy future.

PRINCIPLE 3: First Nations Leadership

First Nations communities' knowledge and experience must be central to decision-making on climate and health policy at all levels.

PRINCIPLE 4: Population Health and Prevention

The response to climate change must be underpinned by a public health perspective, recognising prevention of disease and maintenance of good health across the lifespan assists both mitigation and adaptation.

PRINCIPLE 5: Evidence-Informed Policymaking

The response to climate change must be based on the best available data, evidence and research – but we must also be willing to act on a prudent and precautionary basis in the face of uncertainty and incomplete information.

ENABLERS

The Strategy also outlines actions in the following areas which will 'enable' delivery of its core objectives:

ENABLER 1

Workforce, leadership and training

Support and engage the health and aged care workforce to further develop the skills and capacity to raise public awareness and understanding of the health impacts of climate change and how to take action.



ENABLER 3

Communication and engagement

Effectively communicate and engage with a wide range of stakeholders and the general public to ensure actions to address the health impacts of climate change are widely understood and endorsed.



ENABLER 2

Research and innovation

Invest in and support coordinated climate and health research to improve the evidence base for responses to climate change, strengthen the sustainability of the health system and improve population health and wellbeing.



ENABLER 4

Collaboration and governance

Ensure appropriate governance structures are in place – both cross-jurisdictional and beyond government – to facilitate regular collaboration with all stakeholders.

