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| Sustainability in healthcare update |
| Update No. 29, May 2020 |

The Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority (VHHSBA) produces quarterly sustainability updates to inform health services on sustainability initiatives being implemented across the health care sector, as well as key sustainability issues of interest. We welcome items of interest from health services.

## Environmental sustainability and COVID-19 update

The department is progressing with implementation of its environmental sustainability strategy, though some projects have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The progress report, as of 28 February 2020 will be published on the sustainability in healthcare website over the next few weeks.

The sustainability team is still available during COVID-19 and contact details are at the end of the update. The team is keen to stay connected online. To gauge interest in running a Green Drinks, or coffee-catch-up with members of the sustainability team we have developed a [short survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DYMC2GR) which can be completed by visiting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DYMC2GR>.

### Extension of Waste Education Officer role

The role of Waste Education Officer, filled by Rachel McConville, has been extended to 31 December 2020 to allow the department to continue to provide specialist clinical waste advice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension will also expand on the programs delivered over the previous two years including clinical waste education, increasing resource recovery within hospitals and building networks of hospital staff looking to improve waste management.

### Managing recycling during COVID-19

Waste, including any recyclable materials, should only be disposed of as clinical waste if it meets the criteria of a clinical waste stream detailed in the [Clinical and related waste guidance – Supplement for healthcare staff](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/waste/clinical-related-waste). Waste from patients known to, or suspected of having, a communicable disease, such as COVID-19, must be disposed of as clinical waste. This also applies to screening centres.

Waste from areas of the hospital not treating or testing COVID-19 patients should be disposed of as normal. All recycling should continue during COVID-19 and the State’s waste contractor has not raised any concerns with collecting recyclables.

### Extension of waste collection hours during COVID-19

Local Government Victoria is encouraging local councils to extend the operating hours of waste collection services so that they can commence at 5am weekdays. Victoria’s local governments have been encouraged to accommodate this request and adopt a flexible compliance approach to local noise laws, planning permit conditions and contract terms, so that waste collections can continue at a time that is safe and meets the changing needs of the community.

The Environment Protection Authority will adopt a proportionate regulatory approach that takes full account of the current circumstances while ensuring risks to Victoria’s environment continue to be managed. Further information is available in the [Local Government Victoria bulletin 37/2020](https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/resilience-and-emergency-management/coronavirus-covid-19-information) < https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/resilience-and-emergency-management/coronavirus-covid-19-information>.

If your health service is likely to need to extend waste collection hours, is adjacent to a residential area and waste collection vehicles need to engage reversing beepers, you are encouraged to liaise with your local council early on any extensions and how potential noise issues can be best managed. Further information is available from Rachel McConville, Waste Education Officer, on 8644 5967, or at rachel.mcconville@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

### New Environmental Protection Act postponed to July 2021

As advised in the last update #28, February 2020, new environmental protection legislation was due to commence on 1 July 2020.  The Environment *Protection Amendment Act 2018* will amend the *Environment Protection Act 2017* and repeal the *Environment Protection Act 1970*.

The majority of provisions in the *Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018*  have been postponed to July 2021 – or earlier by proclamation – to allow business and industry to focus on the immediate impacts of COVID-19. Further information can be found on the [EPA website](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/news-media-and-updates/new-environment-protection-act-postponed-to-july-2021) <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au>.

## Clinical waste guidance resources

The Department of Health and Human Services has released the [Clinical and related waste guidance – Supplement for healthcare staff](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com_-3Furl-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww2.health.vic.gov.au-252Fhospitals-2Dand-2Dhealth-2Dservices-252Fplanning-2Dinfrastructure-252Fsustainability-252Fwaste-252Fclinical-2Drelated-2Dwaste-26data-3D01-257C01-257Cki.halstead-2540sustainability.vic.gov.au-257C695fcad26f3d4c908c4908d7be718ae2-257Cb076ce60ca2a41859041851d1b7bc01a-257C1-26sdata-3DfURh-252FszZHVsFwpAZvDZziAucp1hfsR5aEhypZybga-252BY-253D-26reserved-3D0&d=DwMFAg&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=YDDqgXwtAjDEB9Hv-9i5WQa4zvGk_WZ78ZgxNt-Lx0ulJiRL1PWvvSGLiFjZbCNu&m=BB-d7EJQdJaRE8emqzoz0QyIQSM84PD5xrTDx_D03MA&s=2i7OqB5ICe_NSSimy5YYVc_sIgl2wwLF1pllln4VM8I&e=) . The supplement aligns with the Environmental Protection Agencies' (EPA) Clinical and related waste – operational guidance (IWRG612) and is a user-friendly guide for Victorian hospitals and health services, providing a simple and practical decision-making process to help health service staff identify whether items are clinical waste, landfill waste or recyclable.

Audits have shown that a significant proportion of materials put in the clinical waste stream is either general waste, or recyclable. This is costing the health system approximately $4.5 million annually in unnecessary waste costs.

Providing health service staff with a clear understanding of the correct management of clinical waste will reduce contamination and have safety, financial and environmental benefits for staff and patients and assist with:

* reduced risk of infection and needlestick injury,
* compliance with EPA Victoria and Worksafe regulatory requirements,
* compliance with NSQHS Standards,
* reduced environmental damage, such as pharmaceutical waste entering water systems and/or the local environment,
* reduced waste management costs.

Hard copies of the supplement haven been posted to every public hospital and health service, with supporting documents, including posters and presentation templates, available on the [health.vic website](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/waste/clinical-related-waste)  <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/waste/clinical-related-waste>.

If you are a responsible for waste management within your health service it is recommended you review the supplement to ensure waste management practices comply with requirements, waste costs are minimised and environmental and health and safety risks mitigated. It is recommended that the supplement and supporting documents are used as a training tool for all new hospital staff as part of their on-boarding and for any other clinical waste training.

The effectiveness of the supplement has been trialled at a rural health service. Following in-service training with clinical staff, contamination of the clinical waste stream was reduced by 28 per cent, contributing to savings in disposal costs for the health service.

If you have queries relating to the supplement, or require further information regarding clinical waste management, please contact Rachel McConville, Waste Education Officer, on 8644 5967, or at rachel.mcconville@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## NABERS for waste

NABERS (National Australian Built Environment Rating System) is a national rating system that measures the environmental performance of Australian buildings, tenancies and homes. NABERS is a national initiative managed by the [NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment](https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/).

Through the Australian Healthcare Infrastructure Alliance, the Victorian, Queensland and South Australian health departments are developing a NABERS waste tool for hospitals. The project is covered by a three year memorandum of understanding, between parties. Data upskilling and investigation is underway, with benchmarking data due to commence in 2020-21. The aim is to rate 200 hospitals in the first half of 2022, with close to a hundred of these being in Victoria.

The project is being led by a cross-jurisdictional Technical Working Group. If any sustainability officers, or environmental services staff from a Victorian public health service wish to participate in the group, they can contact tiernan.humphrys@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Climate change and health

The department has released its *Annual report on drinking water quality in Victoria 2018–19: Responding to climate change*. The report recognises that climate change is threatening the quality of Victoria’s water, resulting in increased risks to human health. Droughts and rising water temperatures can alter the quality of drinking sources, increased temperatures lead to an increased risk of harmful algae and bushfires in drinking water catchments can compromise water quality. The report is available on the [department’s website](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/drinking-water-in-victoria/drinking-water-quality-annual-report) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/drinking-water-in-victoria/drinking-water-quality-annual-report>.

The State’s Chief Health Officer, Brett Sutton, Vanora Mulvenna, Daniel Voronoff and Tiernan Humphrys published an article *Acting on climate change and health in Victoria* in the Medical Journal of Australia, Volume 212, Issue 8. The article addresses the critical role of public health in driving action on climate change, introduces Victoria’s health and human services climate change strategy and outlines the role of the Victorian health sector in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The open access article is available in the [Wiley Online Library](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50527) <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50527>.

## Guidelines for sustainability in capital works

Sustainable and resilient healthcare buildings offer many benefits including lower environmental impacts, greater resilience at times when they are most needed, lower operating costs and a healthier healing and working environment for patients, visitors and staff. VHHSBA’s new G*uidelines for sustainability in capital works* set key sustainability principles – healing environments, passive design, minimising resource use and resilience to climate change – minimum energy and water design targets, mandatory sustainability requirements and maintain the 2.5 per cent sustainability allowance for initiatives above business as usual.

The guidelines will be published on VHHSBA’s website and on-line sessions are planned. Further details are available from tiernan.humphrys@dhhs.vic.gov.au or julian.freeland@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Environmental data management

Staff responsible for the environmental data management system in public hospitals are encouraged to review data in the system prior to the end of financial year reporting rush. Specific focus should be on reviewing pending data and sourcing any missing data. This is particularly important where data is entered manually, such as LPG or specialist recycling streams. The Building Authority should be informed if utility providers have changed, or new assets have been commissioned and not yet set-up on the system.

Further details are available at the [Edensuite website](http://training.edensuite.com.au/%20or%20you%20can%20contact%20edms%40dhhs.vic.gov.au)  <http://training.edensuite.com.au> or you can contact edms@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Sustainable transport pilot

A project, funded by VHHSBA, has commenced at Peninsula Health, and in conjunction with Eastern Health, to develop a system wide approach to sustainable travel planning. This project is part of VHHSBA’s commitment in its environmental sustainability strategy to develop ten green travel plans at major metropolitan and regional sites. Active City was the successful bidder for the project, bringing their experience from the former Travelsmart program and other hospital projects.

The project is reviewing past initiatives and literature, developing a planning framework, including a survey methodology. The findings will be used to develop travel plans across a selection of pilot sites at Peninsula Health and Eastern Health. There is the potential to test the findings at a rural health service site, to input to the framework design. If your health service is interested, please contact Sarah Bending (see further information below).

We wish to thank the health services that assisted with scoping the initial project including Alfred Health and Melbourne Health. For further information contact sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network

DHHS is a member of Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH), a free collaborative network of health institutions (hospitals, health services, health facilities and health organisations) working to reduce the environmental footprint of healthcare and protect human and environmental health.

Globally there are 1,300 GGHH members in 68 countries who represent the interests of more than 43,000 hospitals and health services. In Australia and New Zealand there are 86 members representing over 1,700 hospitals and health services. Currently 17 Victorian public health services have joined the network.

DHHS encourages each public health service to join GGHH in their own right to access the benefits provided through the network. These include networking and support from a community of sustainable healthcare colleagues in our region (Australia and New Zealand) and globally, access to resources developed specifically for healthcare sustainability, and opportunities for international recognition for environmental achievements.

More information about GGHH, including [member case studies](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.greenhospitals.net_case-2Dstudies_&d=DwMFaQ&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=63QUJ8vPITj9VxQCgC_FOjaQxYjJE-YphC7-xmQoNuw&m=Uurjqc3TQWHuYk1vLypjKryes5fCOzw3UpVk-fmncSs&s=XFwsUIvFennO2jMadz8p0jgvqqwSWwxQWq5OzqqnXUU&e=) in each of the 10 GGHH goal areas, and information on joining the GGHH network is available on the [GGHH webpage](https://www.caha.org.au/globalgreen_healthyhospitals) by visiting <https://www.caha.org.au/globalgreen\_healthyhospitals>.

If you have any questions or would like support becoming a member please contact Carol Behne, CAHA Sustainable Healthcare Program Manager at gghh@caha.org.au.

## Sustainability in healthcare forum 2020

Planning is underway for the second sustainability in healthcare forum, which will have a climate change theme and is planned for 16 October 2020 in Melbourne. We will be evaluating alternative arrangements should it still not be possible to hold face-to-face events.  We welcome any suggestions and/or feedback on what you would like to see on the program, including presentations from your health service. Suggestions can be sent to Sarah Bending, Environmental Programs Advisor at sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Summary of resources online

There are numerous resources available from the department which are on the [Sustainability in Healthcare website](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability) <www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability> and [VHHSBA website](http://www.vhhsba.vic.gov.au) <www.vhhsba.vic.gov.au>. Examples of some of these resources are:

**Templates**

 A range of templates, for example, Environmental Management Plan template, and sample action list.

**Guidance notes, checklists, guidelines and factsheets**

A range of guidance notes across a wide range of topics, for example, Guidance note for monitoring energy and water metering systems, Fleet management – planning for electric vehicles.

Checklists – for example, Victorian food organics waste guide

Sustainability guidelines for capital works, with new guidelines due out this year

**On-line recordings of previous seminars**

VHHSBA has recordings from various sessions it has held over the last few years available to health service staff via links from within the Sustainability in Healthcare forum. These are:

* great cup and last straw debate webinar,
* e-waste to landfill ban, and
* sustainability in healthcare forum on 15 February 2019 (full days sessions)

To access the Sustainability in Healthcare forum, please email sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

We are keen to hear from you on what resources you find most valuable and suggestions for new ones. We are also interested to hear from your health service if you have things that other health services may be interested in, including achievements. We are working with the Global Green and Hospitals Network to make our resources available through their platforms.

## Upcoming events

The following event details are correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change due to COVID-19. You should check with the provider for further details, if the event is available on-line and any cancellation policy.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Victoria (ANMF Vic): Nursing for the Environment – Intensive,  9 October 2020

Institute of Hospital Engineering Australia Annual Conference, Perth, September 2020

Sustainability in Healthcare Forum 2020, Melbourne, 16 October 2020

## Staff movements

John Dixon, is acting engineer at Northeast Health Wangaratta

Caitlin Findley has been appointed as St Vincent Hospital Melbourne’s first Environmental Sustainability Officer. Her background is in waste education and resource recovery programs.

## Further information

Further information on Sustainability in healthcare is available on the departments [Sustainability in Healthcare website](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability) < www.health.vic.gov.au/sustainability>.

To join the Sustainability in healthcare online forum (open to public health service staff) please email sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au or sustainability@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

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