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| Sustainability in healthcare update |
| Update No. 28, February 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.

## Climate change adaptation action plan pilot 2019-2021

The World Health Organization has described climate change as the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. Victoria is not immune to its increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, the potential spread of disease, effects on mental health, and threats to food and water supply.

In 2017, the Victorian Government passed the *Climate Change Act 2017* establishing a legislative framework for action on climate change. The Act creates a legislative obligation for government departments to conduct system-based adaptation planning, with a focus on systems that are vulnerable to climate change. or are essential to ensure Victoria is prepared.

Recognising the urgent need to prepare for climate change, and to share lessons across government, two pilot adaptation plans have been developed for the water and health and human services sector ahead of the legislated deadline of 31 October 2021. The pilots are trialling an approach that can be applied to other sector plans by the deadline under the *Climate Change Act 2017*. The pilot plan was developed following workshops across the health sector and within the department and included five health workshops with twelve health services participating across Victoria. The department is participating in a DELWP led working group to coordinate cross-sector adaptation planning and regional adaptation plans.

The *Pilot health and human services climate change adaptation plan 2019–21* assists the sector to embed climate change considerations into policies, planning, guidelines and operations, and respond to the risks posed to public health and wellbeing. Most importantly, climate change adaptation will ensure that our health and human services continue to provide a high standard of service to Victorians and preserve the community’s health, wellbeing and safety. The pilot plan can be viewed on the [department’s website](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/pilot-health-and-human-services-climate-change-adaptation-action-plan-2019-21-0) < https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/pilot-health-and-human-services-climate-change-adaptation-action-plan-2019-21-0>.

VHHSBA will build on consultation done with the twelve health services in 2018 during development of the plan to develop and identify support needed for the implementation of the plan. A key focus of the pilot plan is to work at the system level to integrate adaptation planning into state-wide processes.

As part of the *Environmental sustainability strategy 2018–19 to 2022–23* a working group has been established to build environmental sustainability and climate change capability in rural health services. This group is due to meet in late February 2020 and progress will be provided to the sector through subsequent updates.

Information on regional climate change planning and regional snapshots are available from the [Department of Environment, Land Planning and Water’s website](https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/information-and-resources/climate-change-adaptation-resources) <https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/information-and-resources/climate-change-adaptation-resources>.

For further information, or to provide feedback or suggestions as part of adaptation planning please contact Sarah Bending, Environmental Programs Advisor at sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au, or on 8644 5968.

**Climate change and health**

Climate change threatens health by causing more frequent bushfires, heatwaves, and algal blooms that threaten drinking water and floods, which drive mosquito-borne disease outbreaks and threaten food security.

The *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023* outlines the vision for a healthier state and breaking down barriers to healthier lifestyles. For the first time, the strategy earmarks climate change as a priority to keep Victorians happy and healthy.

The Better Health channel provides materials on the health impacts of climate change, including a video and information on how to take actions to minimise health impacts associated with climate change, as well as ways to reduce the contribution to climate change emissions.

The *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023* can be accessed from the [Health and Wellbeing plan page](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/public-health-wellbeing-plan) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/public-health-wellbeing-plan> of the Health.vic departmental website.

The climate change resources are available on the new [Climate Change and Health page](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/climate-change-and-health) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/climate-change-and-health> of the Better Health Channel.

## Environmental management plan resources

As part of the review of health service environmental management planning requirements, ten audits of health services were completed in 2019. The audits found environmental management plans were predominantly in place, but there was inconsistency in public reporting due to a lack of clear direction and guidance.

The audit process was used to gain feedback on the types of support sought. These findings have been used to develop a new suite of resources to assist health services to improve environmental performance, including:

* health service environmental sustainability requirements: guide of requirements,
* completing your environmental management plan: instructions and checklist,
* environmental management plan template, and
* sample environmental management actions template.

The new environmental management plan template is aligned with the department's *Environmental sustainability strategy 2018–19 to 2022–23*, emphasising leadership, environmental performance, climate change, governance and reporting on outcomes of action plans.

The second part of the template includes a list of possible actions health services can include in their action plan. New additions to the template include maturity levels for each action and alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We encourage health services to forward additional actions and mini case studies, so that these can be added into the action template to share learnings and reduce the duplication of effort across the system.

The documents are available online from the [Environmental Management Planning and reporting](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/planning-reporting) pages of the department’s Sustainability in Healthcare webpages <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/planning-reporting>.

The department is looking to provide clearer direction and guidance on public environmental reporting in its annual reporting guidelines for health services.

Information on the [*Environmental sustainability strategy 2018–19 to 2022–23*](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/environmental-sustainability-strategy-2018-19-to-2022-23) is available online on the homepage of the department’s Sustainability in Healthcare webpages< https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/environmental-sustainability-strategy-2018-19-to-2022-23>

The department welcomes feedback on the resources and any case studies to supplement the suite of resources and assist other health services improve their environmental performance. For further assistance, or to provide feedback, please contact Sarah Bending, Environmental Programs Advisor at sarah.bending@dhhs.vic.gov.au, or on 8644 5968.

## Environmental Protection Amendment Act

New environmental protection legislation will 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 amendments will provide a more proportionate, risk-based environmental protection framework and will enhance the protection of Victoria’s environment and human health through:

* a preventative approach through a general environmental duty,
* a tiered system of Environmental Protection Authority permissions,
* reforms to contaminated land and waste management,
* increased public availability of environmental information, and
* more modern and strengthened compliance and enforcement powers for the EPA.

Details of the proposed subordinate legislation can be viewed at <<https://engage.vic.gov.au/new-environmental-laws/subordinate-legisltation>>.

## Waste in healthcare

Between July and October 2019, DHHS and Sustainability Victoria ran seven ‘Waste in Healthcare’ workshops, with sessions held in Ballarat, Bendigo, Melbourne, Sale, Wangaratta and Warrnambool. The workshops were attended by 167 people from 40 public health services, 15 private hospitals, Ambulance Victoria and justice.

The aim of the workshops was to mentor and assist participants to develop plans for introducing new or improving existing waste streams in their hospitals, and provide strategies that participants could use to gain buy-in from hospital stakeholders. Key findings from the workshop are provided in the table below.

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| Common challenges | Common success factors | Common objectives |
| Getting buy in from staff, management and infection control.Reducing contamination in bins.Finding space for bins and machinery, including balers.Time constraints (not part of their role).Location and levels of waste produced made it unviable to recycle (regional and rural areas). | Having an engaged CEO or executive team.Investing in infrastructure, such as a baler, or different bins.Having a green team, or environmental ‘champions’.Completing a waste audit before introducing a new recycling stream, or trying to improve one. | Improving staff buy-in and facilitating behaviour change to reduce contamination.Introducing a comingled recycling system in their ward/hospital.Setting up single-use metal recycling, PVC, Kimguard or organics recycling.Replacing existing materials (i.e. plastic pill cups or polystyrene drinking cups) with more sustainable options. |

Feedback from participants at the end of the workshops was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of participants indicating that they would be implementing their action plans in the near future.

If you are looking to improve waste management in your hospital please contact Rachel McConville, Waste Education Officer at rachel.mcconville@dhhs.vic.gov.au, or on 03 8644 5967.

## Solar array maintenance checklist

As with any asset, solar arrays need to be maintained to ensure the systems continue to perform to expected standards. Maintenance requirements are not extensive and revolve around annual electrical inspections, visual inspections, cleaning and reviewing data to assess performance. These requirements should be included in annual maintenance programs.

VHHSBA has prepared a solar array maintenance checklist that will be available through its website and the Asset Management community of practice. In the meantime, a copy can be requested by e-mailing sustainability@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

## Premiers Sustainability awards - Melbourne Health - Reducing hunger and food waste in our community

Melbourne Health was the 2019 winner of the Premiers Sustainability Awards, health category.

The Melbourne Health Central Production Kitchen in Footscray prepares 2800 meals every day for patients at the Royal Melbourne Hospital City Campus site, as well as other metropolitan health services. Over 100 surplus meals have to be prepared each day in case of unplanned events within the various health services or as a contingency for refrigeration breakdowns or food spillages. These surplus meals remain largely unused and are disposed into landfill.

With the aim to help members of the community, and to reduce food waste, the Melbourne Health team partnered with a food rescue and distribution charity to provide food relief to the community. Since February 2018, over 4000 meals per month have been redistributed to the community, which is estimated to remove nine tonnes of food from landfill and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17 tonnes CO2e per year.

Further information is available from the [Premiers Sustainability Awards](https://www.sustainabilityawards.vic.gov.au/Past-Winners/Winners-2019/Health) webpages <https://www.sustainabilityawards.vic.gov.au/Past-Winners/Winners-2019/Health>.

## Sustainability in Healthcare Forum 2020

Planning is underway for the second Sustainability in Healthcare Forum, which will be held on 16 October 2020 in Melbourne. The forum will have a climate change theme. 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.

## 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 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.

## Healthcare’s carbon footprint

A new report on *Health care’s climate footprint: How the health sector contributes to the global climate crisis and opportunities for action* by Health Care Without Harm in collaboration with Arup was launched at the third Greening our Sector Forum at [Western Health](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.caha.org.au_r-3Fu-3DnjxgJwMRN8xdE13Y9ZyBVgqjVSDz4MWcSCFYk-5FCGG1uTrP84oLPAJVxgIqKLw5CXChfAAg5dyJXpnqIbhpTwQQ-26e-3D39864b2c2d7afd26d30c16f2aa056150-26utm-5Fsource-3Dcaha-26utm-5Fmedium-3Demail-26utm-5Fcampaign-3D0909-5Fforum-5Fprogram-26n-3D4&d=DwMFAw&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=63QUJ8vPITj9VxQCgC_FOjaQxYjJE-YphC7-xmQoNuw&m=TU8NYCKaArmH8KvgTlT-1K2Qg_mc-R7BoOirPqcmSLs&s=7LePME635e5im0i__g14W_OrQxAJUtCYRWv647HI-QU&e=) on the 23and 24 of September 2019. The report found that if the global healthcare sector were a country, it would be the fifth-largest greenhouse gas emitter on the planet. Healthcare’s climate footprint is equivalent to 4.4 per cent of global net emissions, or 2 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The Australian healthcare system was the tenth highest emitter by total emissions, contributing five per cent of Australia’s total emission. Australia was the second highest emitter per capita at 1.29 tonnes per person, or nine per cent of total per capita emissions. The report is available from the [Climate Footprint page](https://noharm-uscanada.org/ClimateFootprintReport) <https://noharm-uscanada.org/ClimateFootprintReport> of the Healthcare without Harm (US) website.

## Upcoming events

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Victoria (ANMF Vic)

* Nursing for the Environment – Intensive, June 12 and October 16. [https://cpd.anmfvic.asn.au/events/viewitem/857](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__cpd.anmfvic.asn.au_events_viewitem_857&d=DwMGaQ&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=63QUJ8vPITj9VxQCgC_FOjaQxYjJE-YphC7-xmQoNuw&m=fLstEYqr-wN-U_bBJQaBSTqHVvtsN6vssITuGGygtYI&s=QVYwbw-8wmzML_f-vwWplfmSAwnScNduv6FG38FoF_w&e=)
* Annual Health and Environmental Sustainability Conference, May 1[https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/events-and-conferences/2020/05/01/health-and-environmental-sustainability-conference-2020](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.anmfvic.asn.au_events-2Dand-2Dconferences_2020_05_01_health-2Dand-2Denvironmental-2Dsustainability-2Dconference-2D2020&d=DwMGaQ&c=JnBkUqWXzx2bz-3a05d47Q&r=63QUJ8vPITj9VxQCgC_FOjaQxYjJE-YphC7-xmQoNuw&m=fLstEYqr-wN-U_bBJQaBSTqHVvtsN6vssITuGGygtYI&s=b0rkZuiVAs6VBkoKI4Ga5DfqesH2ieYmGSdH1japgcs&e=)

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

Sustainability in Healthcare Forum 2020,Melbourne, 16 October 2020

## Staff movements

Carlos Machado has commenced as the Sustainability Coordinator at Western Health.

## 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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