

Human Health and Social Impacts Node

Developing strategies on climate change adaptation, resilience and mitigation for the health system in NSW



Research suggests a need for carbon-efficient procedures to lower the impact of healthcare services on the environment. A review of existing environmental healthcare sustainability and climate-resilient strategies is needed to advance the sustainability of the NSW Health system.

As the human health impacts of climate change are becoming evident, health systems will need to adapt to meet the changing health service demand now and into the future. Conceptual models to assist local health districts to prepare for the effects of climate change and implemented responses at a state and local health district level are emerging.

Healthcare itself contributes to climate change. Hospitals are energy intensive, consume large amounts of resources, and produce a large amount of waste. A recent study found the carbon footprint attributed to healthcare was 7% of Australia's total. The results suggest the need for carbon-efficient procedures, including greater public health measures, to lower the impact of healthcare

services on the environment. A review of existing measures is needed to identify current best practice and opportunities for the NSW health system.

This research aims to present a review of existing global best practice recommendations for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient health systems and the application of these recommendations into strategic documents of health system jurisdictions across New South Wales, Australian states and territories and at the national level globally.

This review will complement the work of the Human Health and Social Impacts (HHSI) Node proposal by Malik et al. on the environmental footprint of the NSW healthcare system.

Research outcomes

- A review of existing environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient strategies within health systems and identified best practice. It is hoped that with key stakeholder engagement, this review will help move the discourse towards an environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient health system in New South Wales.

Who will use this information?

- NSW Government
- Local Health District clinicians
- Local Health District clinician's sustainability officers' network
- NSW Health Pillars Sustainability Working Group
- NSW Ministry of Health Sustainability Community
- NSW Health Healthy Built Environments Network
- Researchers

Human Health and Social Impacts Node

Building on current sources of health and climate change information, the Human Health and Social Impacts Node supports the NSW Government by:

1. delivering robust, sector-specific information targeting the health system, vulnerable communities and government agencies
2. establishing baselines for monitoring, evaluation and analysis of adaptation programs that seek to protect and promote health, and strengthen the delivery of health services, in the face of a changing climate
3. improving understanding of vulnerability in the context of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity
4. providing practical information on building resilience in communities and in the health sector.

The work program of the Node is informed by eco-social understandings of relationships between climate change and health. The approach taken acknowledges the range of environmental, social and economic consequences of climate change, including regional variation in impacts and vulnerability.

The Node is a partnership between:

- **NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment**
- **University of Sydney**
- **NSW Health**

For more information:

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