



Gippsland PHN Climate Change Position Statement

Position Statement

Gippsland PHN accepts the call to action from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.¹ Gippsland PHN also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13² requiring coordinated, urgent and timely action in response to climate change.

Gippsland PHN endorses the outcomes of the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit.³ Gippsland PHN commits to actions in alignment with the targets announced in the 2015 Paris Agreement to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius and to make efforts to restrict warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Underpinning the Gippsland PHN commitment is an understanding⁴ that:

- Climate change has resultant effects on the social and environmental determinants of health, manifesting in global increased costs for health and increased mortality rates.
- The health impacts of climate change are overwhelmingly negative and that reducing emissions of greenhouse gases will improve health outcomes, particularly if air pollution is reduced.
- Extreme heat exacerbates pollution, pollen and other aeroallergen levels which negatively impact on cardiovascular and respiratory disease, trigger asthma, and contributes to deaths in the elderly population.
- The increasing incidence of weather-related natural disasters are impacting on coastal and regional populations in the form of destroyed homes. This negatively impacts on mental health including depression and suicide, and communicable diseases.
- The production of food products is impacted by higher temperatures, variable rainfall patterns and drought impacting on food availability and affordability.
- Weather changes increase the risks of vector borne diseases such dengue fever, Ross River virus, and Barmah Forest virus due to longer transmission seasons and changed geographic ranges.
- Health care contributes more than 4.4% of net global climate emissions, which is equivalent to 514 coal-fired power plants⁵
- Extreme weather events and natural disasters driven by climate change will increasingly define the work of PHNs as they are recognised as the logical co-ordinators of regional primary care emergency response⁶.

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2018. **Global Warming of 1.5°C** an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/download/> Accessed 16/4/2021

² United Nations 2015. *Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*. [Climate Change – United Nations Sustainable Development](#) Accessed 16/04/2021

³ United Nations 2019. *Climate Action 2019 Climate Action Summit | United Nations* Accessed 16/04/2021

⁴ World Health Organisation 2018. Climate change and health <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health> Accessed 31/12/2020

⁵ Health Care Without Harm 2019. Health Care's Climate Footprint: How the health sector contributes to the global climate crisis and opportunities for action [HealthCaresClimateFootprint_092319.pdf \(noharm-global.org\)](#) Accessed 16/04/2021

⁶ PHN Cooperative 2020. The role of Primary Health Networks in natural disasters and emergencies- a white paper



Guiding principles for action

Gippsland PHN's guiding principles for action in response to climate change are informed by the Health Care Climate Challenge.⁷ This encourages health care organisations to be proactive about climate change, and to influence, advocate and show leadership through example.

Mitigation

Gippsland PHN will:

- encourage environmentally sustainable solutions and development of initiatives which reduce the reliance on hospital care; and
- consider environmental sustainability and climate impacts in operational decision making in order to move towards net zero emissions.

Resilience

Gippsland PHN believes that PHNs should be authorised co-ordinators of emergency response, have appropriate representation on relevant disaster management committees, and be funded and resourced for preparedness and action.

Gippsland PHN will:

- continue to support mental and physical wellbeing of those impacted by more severe and frequent disasters; and
- work with Commonwealth and State governments to partner and co-ordinate local disaster and emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Leadership

Gippsland PHN will:

- work with other Gippsland leaders to plan for and respond to climate change impacts through understanding, articulating and advocating for the impact of climate change on our communities including the social implications of climate change for inequality; and
- develop our provider workforce with relevant knowledge and skills to address climate related issues.

⁷ Health Care Climate Challenge [The Health Care Climate Challenge](#) Accessed 16/4/2021