

A Climate for Change in Healthcare

November 2023



QUEENSLAND
CLINICAL SENATE

Clinician leadership. Consumer Collaboration. Better Care.



**Queensland
Government**

Meeting report: 'A Climate for Change in Healthcare'

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An electronic version of this document is available at <https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/priority-areas/clinician-engagement/queensland-clinical-senate>

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Why invest in climate change?

We know that our climate is changing. There are examples around us all the time. And we know that these changes are impacting the health of our population.

Exposure to extreme weather such as bushfires and floods has considerable impact on the health of those populations directly impacted. We also know that the health sector is a significant contributor to emissions and we have an obligation to reduce our carbon footprint.

We also understand that the outcomes of change take time, so it's important that climate change mitigation and adaptation is a priority for our health system now.

I want to congratulate the Queensland Clinical Senate and its leadership team for making climate change a priority by giving our clinician leaders, consumers and senior system leaders the space to immerse themselves in this topic and collectively consider what we could do – big and small – to make a real difference. Because what we do now will matter for us and for future generations.

Nick Steele

Deputy Director-General

Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services



Chair's report

It has been said that 'we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children'.

The Queensland public health system contributes almost 50 per cent of all state government emissions. Ninety per cent of this comes from electricity consumption. Presently, 26 percent of electricity used in Queensland is produced from renewable energy sources*. The system also contributes to climate change through transport – air and vehicle – of patients, staff and supplies, clinical waste, equipment, infrastructure and pharmaceuticals.



As a health system, we need to make our best efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change through reducing our carbon footprint, we also need to recognise and implement methods to better adapt to the present and future impacts of a changing climate.

The Senate Climate Change meeting garnered huge amounts of interest—people want to be part of the solution and we were inspired by that. We heard from many experts in this space about why now is the time to be focusing on this topic and what is already being done in Queensland and in other jurisdictions to make a difference for the health of our planet and our population. We recognised that First Nations people's knowledge and enduring connection to Country play an important role in informing and shaping climate action.

As a result of our meeting, the Senate has developed a suite of recommendations that are intended to strengthen a whole of Queensland Health system approach along with recommending activities at a local level.

Our recommendations are informed by a set of principles that recognise the link between our efforts to improve planetary sustainability and improving the health of the population. There are also economic benefits, opportunities to incorporate national and global ideas and best practice. Consumers can be engaged in solution development and our workforce can be empowered.

With healthcare contributing 7 percent of global emissions, we must take responsibility and contribute to national momentum on climate change and healthcare.

As leaders within the health system, we must make every effort to mitigate the risks and also adapt to climate change. We are obliged to do so for our health, the health of our patients and for the health of our future generations.

Dr Tanya Kelly

Chair

Queensland Clinical Senate

*[Queensland Health Climate Risk Strategy 2021-2026](#)

Principles

- Planetary health and healthy populations are intrinsically linked to healthcare sustainability.
- Ensuring a healthy population is a key strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change, and therefore prevention and high-benefit care should be considered intrinsically linked to climate change activities.
- The contribution of healthcare to climate change, along with the risks to health from climate change, should inform a whole-of-system approach including mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- First Nations people's leadership, knowledge and enduring connection to Country are essential in ensuring community-driven, place-based responses inform and shape climate action.
- The Queensland Health approach to climate change and planetary health should incorporate state, national and global ideas, evidence and best practice.
- Healthcare consumers play an important role in climate action and must be engaged in solution development.
- The approaches to climate adaptation should acknowledge inequity of climate change impact and strive for equitable responses to minimise disparities in health outcomes from the impacts of climate change.

Queensland Clinical Senate

A Climate for Change in Healthcare

Climate change is a global public health crisis. It has the potential to significantly impact human health, therefore, every effort should be undertaken to identify, assess, manage and mitigate these risks. The healthcare system is a significant contributor to emissions and therefore has an opportunity to move towards sustainability practices.

First Nations Peoples of Queensland are already disproportionately experiencing the impacts of climate change. First Nations People’s leadership, knowledge and enduring connection to Country are essential in ensuring community driven, place-based responses inform and shape climate action.

Recommendations for Queensland Health

Leadership

- 1 Queensland Health should enhance its leadership role in both state and national approaches to climate outcomes for the healthcare sector and beyond.

Measurement

- 3 The environmental impact including the carbon footprint, from Queensland Health operations, should be robustly measured, using a measurement framework that incorporates emissions from clinical care.
- 4 The environmental benefits of healthcare delivery that promote planetary health, should be incorporated into the measurement framework, including improved outcomes from waste reduction, better asset management, digitising care, high benefit care and a healthier population.



Sustainability

- 6 Queensland Health should commit to developing sustainable buildings (and a roadmap to uplifting current buildings) to an international sustainability standard.
- 7 Health service planning should prioritise the health of populations along with mitigation and adaptation responses to the projected impacts from climate change, integrated across the broader healthcare system.
- 8 Disaster management should prioritise climate related impacts with a specific focus on planning, preparedness, response, resilience and care continuity.

Coordinated response

- 2 Queensland Health should strengthen its coordinated approach to governance and outcomes in relation to planetary health and climate change response.
 - a. Queensland Health should develop a whole of system sustainability framework that includes the Department of Health and Hospital and Health Services and incorporates reporting and accountability requirements.
 - b. Queensland Health’s planetary health and climate change response governance should include consumers, clinicians, First Nations representatives, Hospital and Health Service leaders, and consider both clinical and non-clinical mitigation and adaptation approaches.
 - c. Planetary health and climate change response principles and indicators should be incorporated into Service Level Agreements with Hospital and Health Services.
 - d. Planetary health and climate change response principles and indicators should be formally incorporated across all relevant system planning, policies, procedures and practices, including procurement.

Cooperative

- 5 Climate change interventions across Queensland Health should be cooperative.
 - a. Queensland Clinical Networks should establish a mechanism to provide leadership, advice and advocacy for planetary health and climate change response strategies.
 - b. The Queensland Health approach should include hospital and health service based sustainability roles, resourced to reflect the need for a whole of system approach and support local innovation.
 - c. Planetary health and climate change response interventions, large and small (including actions to reduce waste), should be formally recognised and celebrated by the Department of Health and local Hospital and Health Services.

Awareness

- 9 Queensland Health should improve the awareness, literacy, capability and empowerment of staff and consumers in relation to planetary health and climate change.

Staff recruitment

- 10 Queensland Health should increase the ability to attract, recruit and retain staff through workplaces that embody and support sustainability.

Action Plan

- 11 Queensland Health should develop a Climate Action Plan that strengthens a coordinated approach to governance, coordination and outcomes, to drive immediate and longer-term action in relation to planetary health, climate change and healthcare.





Introduction and background

The healthcare system is a significant contributor to climate change—in fact, the system contributes 7 percent of global emissions. Climate change also has the potential to impact human health. It stands to reason then that as contributors to the problem and providers of healthcare, we must be part of the solution.

The Queensland Clinical Senate meeting, A Climate for Change in Healthcare, gave senior clinicians, consumers and healthcare leaders the opportunity to hear about the imperative for change from leaders in this space, including Monash University's Professor of Planetary Health Tony Capon and the University of Melbourne's Associate Dean of Sustainable Healthcare A/Prof Forbes McGain.

Jean Palutikof, Adjunct Professor of Climate Change at Griffith University and Founding Director of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, infectious diseases expert A/Prof Krispin Hajkowicz and The University of Queensland's Emeritus Paediatric Respiratory Physician Professor Peter Sly spoke about the potential impacts of climate change on human health.

We heard about Queensland Health's 'Climate Risk Strategy 2021–2026' that takes a systems approach to reducing emissions and meeting emissions targets. It outlines the need for climate risks to be considered in decision making across everything from procurement to renovations and new hospital builds, be embedded in all plans and policies, and sets clear policy directions and actions.

The recommendations from the Senate meeting will feed into this systems approach along with activities at a local level.

The Senate meeting coincided with the release of the National Health and Climate Strategy which sets out a whole-of-government plan to address the health impacts of, and address the health system contribution to, climate change.

The meeting

The two-day meeting on 9 to 10 November 2023 was attended by more than 160 Senate members and guests.

As part of, and in addition to the general Senate membership, representation included:

- Australian Digital Health Agency
- Child Health Research Centre, University of Queensland
- Climate and Health Alliance
- Clinical Planning and Service Strategy
- Doctors for the Environment Australia
- Economic Development Queensland
- Griffith University
- Healthdirect
- Health and Wellbeing Queensland
- Institute for Urban Indigenous Health
- Monash University
- Mott MacDonald, global engineering, management and development consultancy

The recommendations from this meeting are advisory and represent a collation of clinical and consumer views and experiences. They are intended to provide advice and complement other activities within the system, both internally and externally to Queensland Health.

****See website for meeting agenda**

<https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/priority-areas/clinician-engagement/queensland-clinical-senate/meetings/climate-change>





Next steps

The recommendations in this report have been endorsed by Queensland Health's Executive Leadership Team, with recommendations 3 and 6 endorsed in principle. The Senate will seek updates on the implementation of endorsed recommendations to keep members and other interested parties informed of progress and provide further input into bodies of work as appropriate.

To find out the progress of these recommendations, please contact the Senate Secretariat via email on qldclinicalsenate@health.qld.gov.au.

Speakers and special guests

Melissa Argent, Chief Executive Officer, Rockpool Residential Aged Care

Dr Ramsey Awad, Executive Director, Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability, Hunter New England Local Health District, New South Wales Health

A/Prof Katy Bell, Clinical Epidemiologist and Health Services Researcher, School of Public Health, University of Sydney

Andrew Bryett, A/Executive Director, Disaster Management Branch, Queensland Health

Prof Tony Capon, Director, Monash Sustainable Development Institute and Professor of Planetary Health, Monash University

David Crowley, Asia-Pacific Healthcare Lead, Queensland Strategic Advisory Lead, Mott MacDonald

A/Prof Krispin Hajkowicz, Staff Specialist, Infectious Diseases, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Karen Hamilton, Principal Project Officer, Healthcare Improvement Unit, Queensland Health

Dr Anne Kovachevich, Sustainable Buildings and Precincts Lead, Mott MacDonald

Rodney Lobwein, Senior Director, Critical Infrastructure and ICT, Health Capital Division, Queensland Health

Prof Lynne Madden, Public Health Physician, Notre Dame University, Sydney

Speakers and special guests continued

Lynda Maybanks, Managing Director, Wirrinyah First Nations Conservation Services

Renae McBrien, Sustainability Consultant, Children's Health Queensland

A/Prof Forbes McGain, Anaesthetist and Intensive Care Physician, Western Health, Melbourne and Associate Dean of Sustainable Healthcare (Medicine, Dentistry, and Health Sciences), University of Melbourne

Bettina McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Healthdirect Australia

Irene Mewburn, Consumer Representative

Janette Moore, Consumer Representative

Lachlan Mortimer, Director Health Service Research Analysis and Modelling (HSRAM), System Planning Branch, Clinical Planning and Service Strategy, Queensland Health

Prof Jean Palutikof, Adjunct Professor of Climate Change at Griffith University and Founding Director of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF)

Kevin Phillips, Director, Office of Hospital Sustainability, Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services, Queensland Health

Stephen Robertson, Board Director, West Moreton Hospital and Health Service and former Minister for Health

Dr Nicole Sleeman, General Practitioner, Member of Doctors for the Environment Australia

Prof Peter Sly, Director, Children's Health and Environment Program and Emeritus Paediatric Respiratory Physician, University of Queensland

Brooke Walters, Director, Sustainable Futures Economic Development Queensland

Meeting Organisers

Dr Tanya Kelly, Chair, Queensland Clinical Senate

Dr Kate Johnston, Deputy Chair, Queensland Clinical Senate

Adj/Prof. Chris Raftery, Immediate Past Deputy Chair, Queensland Clinical Senate

Dr Rizsa Albarracin, Senior Environmental Health Scientist, Environmental Hazards Unit, Health Protection Branch, Queensland Health

Roslyn Boland, Queensland Clinical Senate Executive member and Nurse Unit Manager, Primary and Community Care, Roma, South West Hospital and Health Service

Prof Tony Capon, Director, Monash Sustainable Development Institute and Professor of Planetary Health, Monash University

Dr Marlow Coates, Queensland Clinical Senate executive member and Executive Director of Medical Services, Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service

David Crowley, Principal, Mott McDonald

Chelsea Gourgard, Health Consumers Queensland

Karen Hamilton, Queensland Department of Health

Renae McBrien, Sustainability Consultant, Children's Health Queensland

Kevin Phillips, Director, Office of Hospital Sustainability, Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services, Queensland Health

Dr Catherine A Quagliotto, Public Health Specialist at West Moreton Hospital and Health Service

A/Prof Jeffrey Rowland, Chair, Queensland General Medicine Clinical Network / Clinical Director General Medicine and Acute Sub-Specialties, The Prince Charles Hospital, Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Prof Ian Scott, Chair, Queensland Clinical Networks Executive

Jo Smethurst, Project Officer, Health Consumers Queensland

Dr Kellie Stockton, Queensland Clinical Senate executive member and Executive Director, Allied Health, Metro South Hospital and Health Service

Suzanne Wirges, Health Consumers Queensland

A/Prof Kerstin Wyssusek, Director of the Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Anna Young, Co-Chair, Clinical Council, Children's Health Queensland

QCS Support team

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