

**Doctors for the  
Environment  
Australia**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2010**



[www.dea.org.au](http://www.dea.org.au)

**Doctors for the Environment Australia**

Promoting health through care of the environment

## Chair's Report

Doctors for the Environment (Australia) is dedicated to advocacy and education about the need to conserve and restore the natural environment with a strong focus on the human health impact of climate change and other environmental risks.

Over the past year our organisation has continued to be a strong advocate through the work of many of our members meeting with parliamentarians especially in the lead up to the Federal election, through our publications in the medical and mainstream media, through our education campaigns, including provision of our influential green clinic resource guide developed in conjunction with the Australian Conservation Foundation, through our links with their medical organisations including the Australian Medical Students Association, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, and through our global leadership sharing our initiatives and resources with other member organisations of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE).

A highlight of the past year has been the great work of our many student members with the launch of their highly successful and very visible Code Green campaign, our 2009 student DEA conference and our student members' leadership with the 2010 Global Health Conference.

In 2010 DEA has also been a lead organisation in the establishment of the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) which brings together health professionals and consumer groups concerned about the impact of climate change on health.

The past year has been remarkable for the failure of the world's leaders, in the face of overwhelming evidence, to agree on a plan of definitive action to address climate change. The Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr Margaret Chan, recently wrote that "Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change will affect, in profoundly adverse ways, some of the most fundamental determinants of health: food, air, water. In the face of this challenge, we need champions throughout the world who will work to put protecting human health at the centre of the climate change agenda."

The members of Doctors for the Environment (Australia) are champions and over the past year our members have continued to alert our medical colleagues and the Australian people about the health effects of environmental degradation and the huge health risks of climate change. Our members have provided advice and support on ways that we can all make a difference in the way we live our own lives, operate our clinics and hospitals, and in the way we provide care and advice to our patients.

Over the past year we have also seen further growth and consolidation of our membership base and we have expanded and strengthened our working relationships with governments, with other medical and environmental organisations and with the media, especially Medical Observer magazine. We welcome all our new members and thank our existing members for their sustained support for our important shared work.

Through the generous support of the Poola Foundation we were able to establish a small secretariat in 2009 to support the growing work of our organisation and to expand our educational and advocacy activities. I thank Joy Oddy for her wonderful work running our secretariat.

Membership organisations rely on the support and commitment of their members. I thank the many members of Doctors for the Environment (Australia) who have provided leadership of our state and territory organisations, in our medical student initiatives, and in our advocacy programme with members of parliament. Through the work of our members over the past year, we have been successful in raising national awareness of the health impact of climate change and other key environmental health issues with many members of the Australian parliament and with many politicians in state and territory governments.

My special thanks to the members of the Doctors for the Environment (Australia) Management Committee. Each member has a portfolio of responsibilities and each has made a major contribution of our important work over the past year.

I thank you for your continuing support as a member of Doctors for the Environment (Australia). Together we are making a difference towards preventing and mitigating the serious health threats of climate change. As always the members of the Management Committee welcome hearing from you and receiving your recommendations, advice and ideas.

I thank the members of the Doctors for the Environment (Australia) for the opportunity of serving as the chair of the Management Committee in 2009-2010.

Professor Michael Kidd AM  
Chair  
Doctors for the Environment (Australia)

## **DEA student member activities in 2010**

2009/2010 has been an exciting period of growth and activity for the student body. The national committee has been consolidated and expanded, a multitude of projects have been defined and implemented, university representatives for DEA have been elected and a diverse array of DEA and environmental health presentations and sessions have been lighting up around the country. Although focusing naturally on student domains, student members have engaged formally in political, professional, public and media domains – in tandem with graduate DEA members, and independently.

DEA student members have been formally elected to positions including national, state and university representatives; publication, project and education officers and secretary. During academic semesters, monthly skype-conferences were held to mould campaigns and steer committee direction.

DEA students have run many events, as well as participated and presented at external events. DEA events have included lectures, discussions, film nights, barbeques and bicycle rides. Externally at the national level, DEA students were strongly represented at AMSA's Global Health Conference (Hobart, July 2010), presented at IFMSA's Think Global Workshop (Hobart, July 2010) and hosted the first iDEA student conference (Melbourne, December 2009).

The DEA student committee recognises the importance of collaborative and multi-sectoral action in the area of climate change and health. Subsequently, efforts have been made to liaise with multiple health, environmental and advocacy organisations, including consideration of a formal coalition. In light of multiple projects and plans, this issue was dedicated to be reconsidered in 2011, and in the context of the newly formed Climate and Health Alliance. Multiple links have been forged and consolidated, including with the Australian Medical Students Association, the International Federation of Medical Students Associations, Australian Medical Association, GetUp, Australian Youth Climate Coalition and Beyond Zero Emissions.

Students hope to increase their involvement with graduate members in the coming year, in both the projects mentioned above, and in traditional DEA activities including visiting politicians and greening hospitals and clinics.

## **Interaction with Governments and Elected Representatives**

This interaction has been fostered by letters to members and senators in the federal parliament, by submissions to parliamentary committees and with a program to visit our elected representatives in their constituency offices.

### **Visit your Member of Parliament initiative**

This initiative, commenced in early 2009, has been reorientated to the initiative "Coal is a Health Hazard". DEA members including students are encouraged to visit and brief their federal member or senator on the health aspects of coal mining and pollution from coal fired power stations. The basis for this initiative is detailed at <http://www.dea.org.au/node/383>. New coal mines are approved in the first instance by the States and DEA has formed small committees of DEA members in Victoria and NSW to educate the public on the issue and to visit state members of parliament. The issue is being pursued in the press (see publications).

### **Population Policy**

In 2010 a population debate exploded when the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction with an Australian population projected to be 36 million by 2035. In response, DEA developed a policy "A Sustainable Population for Australia" <http://www.dea.org.au/node/373>, the report recommended

- That a national task force be formed to prepare a scientific report on an environmentally sustainable population for Australia.

- This report must be based upon scientific, demographic and health science and not on the opinions of community sectors with conflicts of interest. The intent will be to provide the data upon which government policy can be reliably based.

All members of parliament were circulated with the policy.

## **Submissions made to Parliamentary Committees**

This is an important part of our work. It serves the important function of placing before a number of Members and Senators important health and environmental considerations and offers the possibility of appearing before a committee to discuss these issues.

*Submission to the Ambient Air Quality National Protection Measure Review Standard Discussion Paper.* In response to

[http://www.ephc.gov.au/sites/default/files/AAQ\\_DiscPpr\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_AAQ\\_NEPM\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_AQ\\_Standards\\_Final\\_201007.pdf](http://www.ephc.gov.au/sites/default/files/AAQ_DiscPpr_Review_of_the_AAQ_NEPM_Discussion_Paper_AQ_Standards_Final_201007.pdf).

The DEA submission is not yet on the government web site.

*Submission to the Standing Committee on Procedure "Inquiry into the effectiveness of House Committees"*

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/proc/committees2/submissions/Sub17.pdf>.

This submission explores the role of House Committees in informing elected representative on complex issues and suggests avenues for more effective government and further education. Examples of complex issues are climate change and the demise of the River Murray system.

*Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries Inquiry into food production in Australia*

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/agric\\_ctte/food\\_production/submissions/sub150.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/agric_ctte/food_production/submissions/sub150.pdf).

The submission addresses many important aspects of agricultural food production and the health of rural communities.

*Submission on Nanoparticles in Australia*

submitted to National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) on behalf of DEA by Don Reid.

## **Medical Observer and DEA collaboration**

### **Background**

Medical Observer is a weekly magazine circulated to 17,500 Australian GPs. Since June 2008, this magazine has featured DEA activity as part of its coverage of environmental health issues. DEA members have been featured in profile stories and have provided expert commentary in many articles with topics including climate change health impacts, environmentally sustainable healthcare, and the promotion of preventative health and environmental co-benefits.

A successful and mutually beneficial arrangement has been established whereby DEA has provided opinion pieces from authors including leading researcher Professor David Karoly and Nobel Prize winner Professor Peter Doherty. The articles have been published with acknowledgement of DEA as the source.

Medical Observer has assisted in disseminating DEA's messages by way of collaborating in the production of patient education materials and coverage of DEA events. Educational resources have included the "Help yourself and help the planet" brochure, and the "Prescription for a Healthier Planet brochure" which continues to be available for download on Medical Observer's website.

DEA acknowledges the editorial vision of Ms Deana Henn in raising the profile of environmental issues at Medical Observer, and greatly appreciates the continued editorial support of Mr Simon Wooldridge and Ms Kellie Bissett.

## **DEA articles in Medical Observer 2009-2010**

Since the 2009 DEA AGM, over 25 articles have been published in Medical Observer on climate change or other environmental health topics, most of which have been badged with a "Green Issue" logo. DEA has been cited or featured in over one third of these articles.

The Annual "Green Issue" of July 30 gave prominent coverage to DEA and many of its members including

- A profile of green practice advocates Dr George Crisp and Dr Richard Yin
- A two-page feature article on climate change health impacts entitled "Climate Change – Prepare for the Worst", with commentary from DEA national committee member Dr Graeme Horton and DEA member Associate Professor Colin Butler
- GPs including Dr Richard Stiles and Dr Alison Bleaney discussing how to deal with suspicions of local environmental hazards

In the past year, DEA has produced or sourced the following five opinion pieces for Medical Observer:

- "Climate change action can't wait" Professor David Karoly, 2 October, 2009. Professor Karoly expertly refuted common misinformation circulated by climate change deniers.
- "Doctors need to join together against warfare" Dr Bill Williams, 5 February, 2010. The President of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War calls on doctors to advocate safeguarding our health and environment by raising awareness of the impacts of war.
- "Lose weight and save the planet - ask me how": an article about the health and environmental benefits of sustainable diets by Dr Rosemary Stanton, 18 June, 2010.
- "Doctors must be agents of change" Prof Robyn McDermott, 30 July, 2010. Professor McDermott calls on doctors to be leaders, not followers in promoting a healthy, educated and sustainable population.



- “The health dangers of coal-fired power” Dr Dimity Williams, 30 July, 2010. Dr Williams writes that we no longer have a social licence to continue the mining of coal in light of its true cost to society.

Following from Dr Dimity Williams’ opinion piece, a two page feature article on 10 September, 2010, “Taking on the Mother of All Causes” highlighted her DEA involvement and calls for climate change to be an increasing focus of health care and health education.

## **Educational Activities**

DEA members have continued to pursue every opportunity to speak to community groups, hospital ‘grand rounds’ and at medical meetings. Two highlights were:

### **The World Congress of Internal Medicine**

DEA held a booth in the exhibition hall at the World Congress of Internal Medicine, March 22-25, 2010 in Melbourne. The booth was an educational facility for climate change and health with posters and handouts; DEA members were in attendance to answer questions.

There were 1580 registrants from 58 countries, including around 930 from Australia and 160 from New Zealand. Other countries with high attendance included Italy, Thailand, South Korea and Bangladesh.

Visitors to the booth included Professor Geoff Metz, President, Royal Australasian College of Physicians; Professor Ian Gilmore, President Royal College of Physicians London; Professor William Fitzgerald, President, Royal College Physicians and Surgeons Canada; Professor Anthony Capon ANU; Dr Simon Slota-Kan, Victorian Dept of Health and Dr Lynne Madden NSW Dept of Health.

Notable in the program was the speech of Bob Brown on world population growth as well as climate factors during which he showed the DEA/AMSA video.

### **Sustainability and Health think-thank, “Prescriptions for a healthy planet”, Sydney, April 16<sup>th</sup>**

This one day think-tank style meeting was organised jointly by Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) and the Institute of Sustainable Solutions (ISS), University of Sydney.

The main aim of the meeting was to explore and promote the consideration of health within key aspects of sustainability and climate change. Four major themes provided the bases of discussion, one theme for each session. These themes were supportable populations; reducing poverty and social disadvantage; healthy urbanisation and responsible business. Brief introductions to each theme were delivered by invited experts in each area, but the majority of time was devoted to small group work and reporting back of major discussion points. The expert panel then provided commentary and summary of the issues raised during each session.

Attendance was by invitation only, and participants came from a wide range of organisations, including business, academia, politicians, public service, media, medical practitioners and charitable NGOs. One of the highlights of the meeting was the passion of presenters and attendees, and the healthy debate that occurred mostly in a respectful manner between these different groups. Over 50 people attended the day, with many staying on for the informal social event that followed.

It is difficult to quantify the benefit of such an event, but I believe that it provided a number of benefits and was worth the investment of \$5,000 that DEA contributed to organise the event, as well as the time of one of the DEA executive members.

At tea breaks and lunch there was extensive networking and sharing of business cards. Delegates from business and media backgrounds had the opportunity to receive from experts and academics information they might not otherwise be exposed to, and be challenged to integrate sustainability more deeply within their work environments. The event received a small amount of media coverage and contributed to increasing the 'brand recognition' of DEA. Unfortunately the ISS still have not provided the written summary of the discussion points that were collated for each theme, despite numerous requests for access to this information. However, the major benefit was probably gained by those who were involved in the day, to refine or direct their thinking about sustainability, rather than a list of points or recommendation.

This meeting was seen as the beginning of a process to link health and the environment, and ongoing dialogue is occurring with the Uni of Sydney ISS for follow-up meetings or collaborations. A list of meeting recommendations will be circulated when this is refined and completed, and hopefully this new loose network of diverse groups will be able to endorse a letter to the current government on some of the issues explored. <http://www.sciencehub.com.au/16-apr-10-thought-leaders-join-forces-to-prescribe-for-a-healthy-planet/>

## **Summary of the Treasurer's Report for the financial year 2009-2010**

This past year has seen DEA open its national office in Pasadena, outside Adelaide, and employed its first Administration Officer, Ms Joy Oddy.

These costs have been met in part by a generous grant from the "The Poola Foundation – Tom Cantor Fund", and from the generous support of DEA members following the rise in subscriptions 2 years ago and the increase in membership during this time.

The funds held in accounts for the year ending June 2010 was \$124,000 (compared to \$81,000 for year ending June 2009).

Please see the 'Income and Expenditure Statement' for more details.

John Stokes, Honorary Treasurer



## Appointment of DEA Administrative Officer

DEA appointed Ms Joy Oddy as Administrative officer. Already her presence has greatly increased the activity and efficiency of the organisation and we thank Joy for her efforts. Her office has been rented in the Greening Australia building which has excellent facilities for small meetings.

## Publications

Blashki G, Berry H, Kidd MR. Primary health care responses to climate change. IN: Moss J (editor). Climate change and social justice. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009:144-167 (ISBN: 1 875978 48 8)

Horton G, Hanna L, Kelly B. "Drought, drying and climate change: emerging health issues for ageing Australians in rural areas. Australasian Journal on Ageing 2010; 29:2-7. Article includes reference to DEA's Greenclinic initiative with the Australian Conservation Foundation

Kayak E. 'How health is a climate change issue', ABC Environment Online Opinion, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2010. <http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2010/08/17/2985345.htm>

Kidd MR. General practice and the Australian government's national health reform plan. Medical Journal of Australia; 193: 71-74

King D. 'A changing climate: ethical and religious responses', Luke's Journal, vol 1, 2010

McGain F, Kayak E, Story D. The Green Anaesthetist. In Riles R.H (ed). Australasian Anaesthesia 2009. (pp67-75) Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, Melbourne, 2009. ISSN 1032-2515

McGain F. 'Hospital Waste', Issues; 92, September 2010: Waste. Publisher: Control Publications <http://issues.control.com.au/>

Shearman D. The heat is on for change: coal. The Australian, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/the-heat-is-on-for-change-coal/story-e6frq8y6-1225889568496>

Shearman D. Coal mining's black record over health issues allowed to go unchecked. The Courier Mail, 21 July 2010.

Shearman D. Education revolution for parliamentarians <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s3025258.htm>

Shearman D. Coal is a health hazard. ABC on line, 12 February, 2010. <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2817614.htm>

Shearman D. The Medical Profession and Economic Growth. Economic Reform Australia Newsletter ISSN 1324-5929, volume, 3 No.50 pp.15-17

Shearman D. Queensland Rail: where's the smart money?

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/40316.html>

## **Conferences, Talks and Lectures**

Chen A, Climate change and health and DEA, Monash University, Gippsland, April 2010

Correy J, Church R, DEA discussions, University of Hobart, April 2010 x 2

Crisp G, Coastal Environment and Climate change: Dr Rob Kay (Coastal Zone Management); George Crisp and Richard Yin overview of Green Practice, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Crisp G, Impact of radiation on human health. Public Meeting, Wongutha Birni Cultural Centre, WA, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Crisp G, Feeding our Coal Addiction: Health effects of air pollution. Public lecture, Conservation Council, WA, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Crisp G, 'Health Consequences of Uranium Mining', Public Health Forum, Nedlands WA, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Crisp G, DEA Film night: Food Inc., 8<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Crisp G, DEA Film night: Age of Stupid, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010

Crisp G, GreenPractice lecture to medical students via Skype, 2010.

Hamel Green I, Code Green, University of Melbourne, Rural Clinical School Retreat, September 2010

Horton G. "Mercury rising: Will we get sicker as the planet gets hotter?" St George Hospital Symposium, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Kogarah NSW.

Horton G. "Medical education, environmental health and other potential strings to a GP's bow". Presentation to University of Newcastle GP Club, 10 August, 2010.

Inaugural Student Meeting, December 2009. Several DEA members spoke - including Grant Blashki, David Shearman, Forbes McGain, Merryn Redenbach, Dimity Williams and Colin Butler (via video link). Dimity Williams presented the DEA "Health Impact of Climate Change" PowerPoint presentation, December 2009.

Kayak E, Climate Change and Health Implications, the Alfred Anaesthetic Department, 22nd January 2010

Kayak E, Climate Change and Health Implications, the Austin Anaesthetic Department, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Kayak E, McDermott R, McGain F, Rasmussen L. 'Understanding the impact of climate change on human health and quality of life', Green Hospital Conference, Sydney, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Kidd MR, Keynote lecture on the health consequences of climate change and what we, as doctors, can do, AMSA Global Health Conference, Hobart, July 2010

King D, Health and Sustainability conference, Sydney, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010

King D, 'Climate change at the bedside', University of QLD, MBBSS II students, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2010. – Mayne medical school, Herston.

King D, keynote lecture 'Environment and Health; why prevention is better than cure', Environmental Health Australia, Surfers Paradise, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Kirczenow I, 'Going Nuclear? True or False; Nuclear is a proven, reliable and secure low carbon emission energy technology' public debate Science Network Western Australia, December 2009.

[http://www.sciencewa.net.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2873%3Anuclear-power-fuels-public-health-risks&Itemid=200072](http://www.sciencewa.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2873%3Anuclear-power-fuels-public-health-risks&Itemid=200072)

Liaison with Green Health Group, University of Melbourne

Liaison with TIME global health group, University of Brisbane

Maxwell J, DEA and Climate change and health, University of Melbourne, Rural Clinical School Retreat September 2010

Maxwell J, Environmental Health, Climate Change and DEA, VIGOUR Rural Awareness conference (Victorian Interdisciplinary Group of Universities for Rural Health), March 2010

Office of Appeals Convenor - George Crisp presented information relating to air pollution and health effects as part of delegation including Conservation Council of WA. 6<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Pearson K, "Climate the Environment and Older Person's", Victoria Geriatrician's monthly scientific meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Soutar K, Green Drinks, University of Sydney, May 2010 & June 2010

Redenback M, Joseph S, 'Climate Change and Health Implications', Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Redenback M, Lenko D, 'Climate Change and Health Implications', Monash Medical Centre, Melbourne, 18/8/10

Redenback M, 'Climate Change and Health Implications', Deakin University, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Redenback M, DEA and Code Green, Deakin University, September 2010

Ticehurst B. 2010 Human Health and Climate Change. University of Notre Dame, Sydney, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010

Ticehurst B. 2010 Human Health and Climate Change. University of Sydney, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Ticehurst B. talk given to the St Vincent's/Mater Hospitals Environmental Stewardship Board, St Vincent's Clinic, Darlinghurst, NSW, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Towle N, 2010, AMSA Global Health Conference presentation. Facing the global sustainability emergency, the impacts of climate change and peak oil on health, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010

Towle N, 2010, the changing context of health service delivery, climate change and health presentation, University of Tasmania, Health Science students, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Towle N, 2010, Climate change and health presentation, University of Tasmania medical student lecture, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2010

Towle N, 2010, Climate change: The biggest health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Hospital Health Forum, North West Regional Hospital, Tasmania, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010

Towle N, 2010, Climate change: The biggest health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Hospital Grand Round, Launceston general Hospital, Tasmania, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010

Weber I, Climate change and health, Grand Rounds at Flinders Medical Centre, Lyell McEwin Hospital, Royal Adelaide Hospital and Hampstead Hospital, May – August 2010

Weber I, Climate change and health, nurses at the RAH Chest Clinic, Rotary Club of Unley, CLEAN SA, students at University of Adelaide x 2, Global Health Seminar May – September 2010.

Weber I, Professor William Martin (Geologist), Climate change and health presented to 70 GP's, Adelaide, 9.9.2010

Weber I, Climate change and health, Environment Health Officers including council workers and health food inspectors, Adelaide, 29.4.2010

## **Media, Press, Interviews**

David Shearman was interviewed on Spoke, 3 Triple R 102.7FM as part of the Sustainable Living segment with Luke Taylor from SLF [www.slf.org.au](http://www.slf.org.au), giving an overview on the work of DEA, the role of medical professionals in the climate change debate and the health impacts of climate change 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Dimity Williams, Grant Blashki and Eugenie Kayak 'Taking on the mother of all causes' Medical Observer, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010