



Doctors welcome report as first step in treating the climate change health threat

WA doctors have today welcomed the Sustainable Health Review report as a first step in addressing climate change as a major health threat, and creating a health system that focuses more on prevention than cure.

Doctors' group Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) welcomes recommendations relating to:

- Addressing climate change as a health threat, including specific resources on a system-wide basis similar to the successful model used in the United Kingdom's Sustainable Development Unit.
- Reviewing and reducing the health sector's waste and environmental footprint.
- Increasing our focus and investment in prevention, to account for at least 5 percent of total health spending in WA by 2029.
- Addressing inequity, mental health, and the social and environmental determinants of health.

Local GP and DEA member Dr George Crisp said: "In Australia, we're already seeing the effects of climate change with worsening heatwaves, bushfires and floods. Our Great Barrier Reef is on life support, and the drought in eastern Australia is unprecedented. These events result in increases in the incidence of injury, mental illness, changes in infectious disease patterns, death, loss of livelihoods and damage to health infrastructure.

"Such issues will only worsen, and eventually become unmanageable, if we do not urgently reduce our country's use and export of fossil fuels including coal and gas, and prepare our health systems for a changing climate."

Dr Crisp said our health systems can contribute to the solution, and ensure that the sector is 'doing no harm' toward not just patients but also the wider community and younger generations.

"The health sector is responsible for 7% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. The amount of waste generated by health services is also gigantic and there are major opportunities to reduce, reuse or recycle many single-use items."

The increased focus on preventative health was also welcomed. Many cases of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, stroke and cancer are preventable and related to the conditions in which people grow up, live, work and play.

Dr Crisp said, “Health Impact Assessments, which were included in the report recommendations, can help to design suburbs that are more connected and amenable to walking and cycling, with better access to biodiverse green spaces and restricted access to processed and fast foods. This helps tackle our obesity and mental health crises, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss, and make suburbs cooler during heatwaves. It’s a win, win, win.”

Dr Crisp said the challenge for doctors and the wider community now was to ensure the WA Government followed through on its commitment to look after the health and well being of its citizens by implementing the report’s recommendations in full.

Interview opportunities

Dr George Crisp

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Resources

[Sustainable Health Review Final Report](#)

DEA Climate Change Fact Sheet

https://www.dea.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2017/02/DEA_Climate_Change_Health_Fact_Sheet_final.pdf

About DEA

DEA is an independent organisation of medical doctors protecting health through care of the environment.

We are supported by a Scientific Advisory Committee of distinguished health experts: Prof Fiona Stanley AC, Prof Stephen Boyden AM, Prof Emeritus Chris Burrell AO, Prof Colin Butler, Prof Peter Doherty AC, Prof Michael Kidd AM, Prof David de Kretser AC, Prof Stephen Leeder AO, Prof Ian Lowe AO, Prof Robyn McDermott, Prof Lidia Morawska, Prof Peter Newman AO, Prof Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal AC, Prof Hugh Possingham, Prof Lawrie Powell AC, Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM, Dr Norman Swan