



# CLIMATE AND HEALTH ALLIANCE

CAHA Newsletter November 2011 edition

## Climate and Health News

### Australian health sector to be represented at UN climate talks

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) will join an international delegation of climate and health leaders at the next round of international climate negotiations in Durban, South Africa in December.

CAHA is a partner in the first ever Global Climate and Health Summit on 4th December - being held in parallel with the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17), being organised by [Health Care Without Harm](#), the [Climate and Health Council](#)(UK), the [World Federation of Public Health Associations](#), and the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Summit aims to raise the profile of public health in the global negotiations on climate change.

The Summit outcomes will be presented at a [UN side event](#) on Thursday 8th December.

## Green Healthcare News

### Austin Health kicking green goals



The environmental performance of Austin Health, comprising Austin Hospital, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital and the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre, in Melbourne's northeast, has just been evaluated in their third annual [Sustainability Report 2010-11](#), demonstrating a reduction in waste, water consumption and fuel usage.

This health service has increased the volume of recyclables diverted from landfill, observed a drop in the amount of clinical waste generated, reduced the volume of water used per patient in some settings, and improved energy efficiency, leading to an overall drop in greenhouse gas emissions. Also, the establishment and revegetation of garden areas has been facilitated through the appointment of a garden and grounds project officer.

For more information, please contact Julianna Balogh, Austin Health's Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, [julianna.balogh@austin.org.au](mailto:julianna.balogh@austin.org.au).

## Coal industry harming health and climate



The huge expansion of the coal industry in Australia has ominous implications for human health and climate change, according to senior medical professionals writing in a recent issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Castleden et al report that people in coal mining communities face increased risk of cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, other lung diseases, and kidney disease.

Coal mining is also a dangerous occupation, with miners and those transporting coal facing increased risk of death and injury. Coal mining communities experience elevated risk of mental health disorders.

Coal mining also poses significant threats to groundwater ecosystems including farm dams, bores and rivers.

In addition to the direct health costs, the future costs from climate change are sobering, as the authors state: "*To persist in mining and burning coal will condemn future generations to catastrophic climate change, which is clearly the biggest health problem of the future.*"

The full article is available (subscription required) [here](#).

## Resources

### Showcasing environmental excellence in healthcare

Environmental healthcare leaders, the Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment and the University of Maryland School of Nursing, held a conference in November to showcase the hospitals transitioning to sustainable healthcare environments.

**MD H<sub>2</sub>E**  
Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment



Presentation topics included building design and construction, carbon footprint reductions, reducing chemical use, community benefits, cost savings, employee engagement and/or satisfaction, reducing patient exposure, sustainable food practices, waste reduction, and water conservation. Presentations are available [here](#).

### [Resource smart health care in Victoria](#)

ResourceSmart Healthcare is a program for all Victorian public and community sector healthcare organisations.

This program provides assistance in developing and implementing an environmental policy, environmental objectives and targets, and a sustainability strategy covering: water, energy, waste and recycling, transport, biodiversity, procurement, behaviour, operations and service delivery.

More information is available [here](#).

## Green economy good for health

Strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can “directly improve the length and quality of human life”, writes health journalist Ray Moynihan in a recent issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Moynihan reports on the growing evidence, documented in a recent World Health Organisation series, *Health in the Green Economy*, which demonstrates many emissions reduction policies will have benefits for both health and the environment, and “some of those having the largest impact on mitigation may also deliver the largest health gains”.

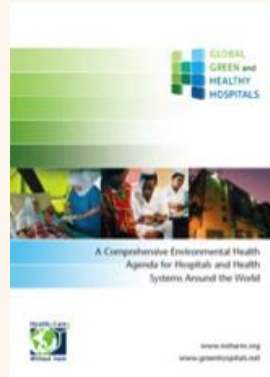


The health care sector itself is a “key climate change culprit” however, writes Moynihan, since it likely contributes (accurate figures are not available) around 8% of national greenhouse gas emissions.

The ‘greening’ of health care facilities offers a ‘win-win’ strategy however, as using more renewable energy and adopting sustainable procurement practices can save energy and procurement costs *and* cut emissions.

The full article is available (subscription required) [here](#).

## Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Agenda



A new resource has been developed to assist hospitals and healthcare settings around the world achieve greater sustainability and to contribute to improved public environmental health.

The *Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Agenda* has been developed by Health Care Without Harm and provides a comprehensive framework for hospitals and health systems to fulfill on a series of environmental commitments by working through action plans developed for each of the framework’s ten goals.

Download the framework [here](#).

## CAHA NEWS

### New members!

The Climate and Health Alliance has welcomed two new organisational members, the [Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth \(ARACY\)](#) and the [Royal College of Nursing Australia \(RCNA\)](#). ARACY CEO Lance Emerson and RCNA delegate Liz Hanna have joined the CAHA Committee of Management.

## Extreme weather risking pharmaceutical supplies

Supplies of vital medicines are at risk from extreme weather events, according to a new paper published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*. Australia ran out of the intravenous penicillin, benzylpenicillin, some weeks ago and its international supplier has warned ensuring a secure supply may take several more weeks. According to supplier CSL, international floods and disasters have created a critical global shortage, and normal supplies were recently disrupted for several months.

Public health physician Simon Quilty and colleagues write that: "increasing climate instability... could interrupt manufactures and supply chains and could lead to unexpected disaster-associated mortality".

In an associated piece on the [Croakey health blog](#), Quilty writes that while in this case there were other antibiotic substitutes to fill the gaps, Australia's medicines supply is not as secure as might be hoped. Medicines used in acute settings, such as antibiotics and intravenous fluids, are particularly vulnerable to these kinds of unpredictable shortages, says Quilty, as are some anti-cancer chemotherapy drugs.

Read more [here](#).

## Climate change and health and global security

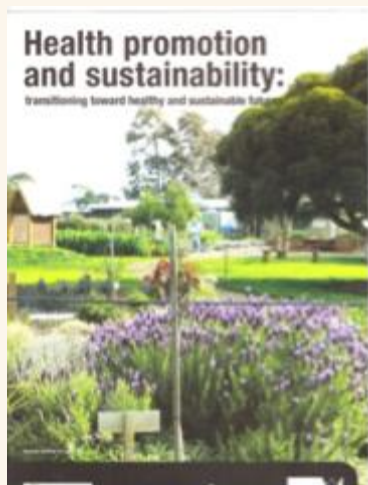
Health and military experts meeting in London have called for [urgent action on climate change](#), following a

## EVENTS

### Environment and Security Conference

18-20 January 2012 Washington DC  
The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE's) 12th National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment: *Environment and Security*, will explore the interconnected themes of Climate Disruption, Food Security, Energy Security, Water Security, and Environment & Public Health Security.

### Health promotion and sustainability report



This health promotion and sustainability report outlines the sustainability context in health promotion and identifies opportunities for health promoters to promote sustainability through their practice.

The report contains six case studies and an extensive literature review about successful sustainability practices in the healthcare context.

conference on the health and security implications of climate change in London last month.

Signatories to a joint statement released by the conference included Dr Fiona Godlee, Editor in chief, *British Medical Journal*; Dr Hamish Meldrum, British Medical Association; Professor Hugh Montgomery, Professor of Intensive Care Medicine at University College London and Director of the UCL Institute for Human Health and Performance; Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Royal College of Physicians; Dr Richard Horton, Editor-in-chief, *The Lancet*; Dr. Hege Gjessing, President, Norwegian Medical Association; Dr Heidi Stensmyren, Vice-president Swedish Medical Association; and Dr Bjørn Oscar Hoftvedt, Norwegian Medical Association.

View the statement [here](#) and see videos of the speakers [here](#).

### **Creating Healthy Sustainable Societies conference**



Health and sustainability enthusiasts had a wonderful weekend in October at the Melbourne Sustainable Societies conference, Creating Healthy Sustainable Societies, hosted by MSSS's Health Equity theme.

Participants heard from Tony Capon, from the University of Canberra on creating health sustainable cities, and the need to create 'bio-sensitive cities' to preserve urban natural capital; Billie Giles Corti shared her research on how to 'future-proof' cities through planning for higher density with infrastructure to support

The report, compiled by School of Health and Social Development at Deakin University, is available online [here](#).

### **Rural health art competition**



Rural Australians are urged to contribute to an art competition being run by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the National Rural Health Alliance.

Themes of health and wellbeing of Australians are sought for artwork to appear on the cover of AIHW publications. Prizes available. Entries close 5.00pm (EDST) Friday 6 January 2012.

More information available at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

active transport; Robin Stott shared the history and aspirations of the Climate and Health Council in the UK.

There were a number of presentations on greening the health sector, with Forbes McGain sharing a case study from Melbourne's Western Hospital; and Eugenic Kayak spoke on that four letter word: coal, outlining the risks from proposed and existing power generation and mines in Victoria.

View the presentations [here](#).

Visit CAHA at [www.caha.org.au](http://www.caha.org.au)

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