

Healthcare Sustainability and Resilience Module

Integrating environmental sustainability and
climate resilience in the safety and quality of care

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Introduction

Introduction

Human health and wellbeing depends on clean air, water, food, stable shelter and a liveable environment. Since industrialisation, there has been significant degradation of the Earth's natural ecosystem and increases in emissions. These are the result of human activity

Australia has one of the best healthcare systems in the world, however healthcare's contribution to national greenhouse gas emissions is estimated to be between 5% and 7%. This has implications for human health requiring further healthcare.

Designing and redesigning health services or facilities, procurement, supply-chain management, waste management and continuous quality improvement are effective ways for health service organisations to address their environmental impact. Healthcare itself contributes to avoidable environmental impacts through practices such as:

- Unnecessary tests, procedures or interventions that introduces risk and harm to patients
- Poor use and management of medicines, devices and materials
- Unnecessary use of resources in healthcare
- Inadequate preventative health programs
- Healthcare acquired complications
- Unnecessary travel
- Unmanaged energy and water use
- Ineffective design and management of facilities.

The workforce plays an important role in driving change. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, in partnership with the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control and Australian medical colleges, signed a [Joint Statement](#). This signifies a shared commitment to address the health impacts of climate change and supports clinicians delivering high-quality care that protects and promotes health in a changing climate.

Safety and quality standards for sustainability and resilience

Safety and quality standards for sustainability and resilience

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) recognises the importance of delivering sustainable healthcare services and reducing harms from their environmental impact. It is equally important that resilient healthcare services remain accessible and effective in improving patient outcomes despite the changing climate risks.

High-quality health care is safe, accessible, effective, integrated and person-centred. At a health system level, it is efficient, sustainable and equitable - and reduces avoidable impact on the environment and the subsequent risks to patients from unnecessary care.

The Healthcare Sustainability and Resilience Module (the Module) is a framework of actions for health service organisations to implement strategies that address environmental impacts and climate risks in their governance, safety and quality improvement systems to achieve high-quality care.

The Module complements safety and quality standards

The Module is applied with other national safety and quality standards developed by the Commission. Implementation will vary widely across settings, as the safety and quality systems will vary, depending on the size of the organisation and the risks associated with the services being delivered.

The Module supports health service organisations when setting their priorities, targets and strategies for their existing and new services. It supports partnering with consumers to design, monitor and evaluate services. Action taken to measure and address sustainability and resilience outcomes should form part of the health service organisation's safety and quality performance monitoring.

The Module aligns with the strategic work on climate change developed by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, including the [National Health and Climate Strategy](#).

Implementing the Module

The Module requires the integration of environmental sustainability and climate resilience in patient safety and quality improvement programs.

Implementation of the Module involves ongoing quality improvement of an organisation's systems, the delivery of care and the engagement with the workforce, patients and community.

Intent of the Module

Health service organisations **improve their sustainability** by considering and reducing the environmental impact of harm on its patients, community and environment.

Health service organisations **improve their resilience** by identifying and addressing how climate risks affect patients, consumers, community and the delivery of services.

Health service organisations **integrate sustainability and resilience** into their governance, leadership and quality improvement systems to deliver person-centred and high-quality care.



Patient statement

My health service finds ways to improve the quality of care I receive when making changes for sustainability. They understand the risks that come from changes in the environment and partner with me and the community to make sure I can continue to access high-quality care that is adaptive and resilient.

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The Module actions are dependent on other actions in national safety and quality standards developed by the Commission, such as the [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#) or the [National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards](#).

Each item listed next to the Module actions describe the corresponding section of the other national safety and quality standard being applied.

Module actions

Item	Action
Governance, leadership and culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The governing body: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provides leadership to address environmental sustainability and climate resilience within the health service organisation b. Ensures partnering with consumers and the community on issues and strategies for environmental sustainability and climate resilience to provide person-centred, high-quality care c. Sets organisational priorities and targets that align to legislation and jurisdictional requirements relevant to environmental sustainability and climate resilience d. Monitors progress on the organisation's safety, quality and effectiveness of environmental sustainability and climate resilience strategies
Evidence-based care and health outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The health service organisation uses its governance systems to implement evidence-based strategies for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identifying priority areas with high environmental impact and significant climate risk b. Reviewing clinical practices to identify and address healthcare variation and unnecessary use of resources c. Considering environmental impact and climate risk in decision making, planning and evaluation d. Redesigning processes, practices and services to provide high-quality care that reduces environmental impact and climate risk

Item	Action
Measurement and quality improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The health service organisation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Integrates measures and indicators of environmental impact and climate risk into its quality improvement systems b. Uses information on environmental sustainability and climate resilience to provide high-quality care
Safety and quality training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The health service organisation uses its training systems to provide the workforce with the skill and knowledge to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement quality improvement strategies that assess and reduce environmental impact and climate risks b. Use measures and indicators to improve safety, quality and effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation strategies
Communication that supports effective partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The health service organisation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Supports its workforce, patients and community to understand and participate in strategies that improve environmental sustainability and climate resilience in health care b. Reports to the governing body, the workforce, patients and the community on its adaptation and mitigation strategies and performance

Glossary

The terms below reflect the meanings of the words in the context of this specific document.

Adaptation. A resilience strategy that incorporates actions or efforts taken to address or manage the anticipated or current impacts of climate risks. These impacts may be those affecting individual patients or community health services, infrastructure, or service delivery.

Governance. Where leaders of a health service organisation have a responsibility to the community for continuous improvement of the safety and quality of their services, and ensure that they are patient-centred, safe and effective.

Climate risk. The factors originating from the environment that impact access to health services, service delivery or health outcomes.

Governing body. A group of healthcare officials who have authority to exercise governance over a health service organisation.

Environmental impact. The factors that cause harm to the environment when not properly mitigated, including chemicals, medicines, healthcare waste and greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and desflurane).

Health service organisation. A service that is responsible for implementing clinical governance, administration and financial management of a service unit or service units providing health care at the direction of the governing body.

Mitigation. A sustainability strategy that incorporates actions or efforts taken to reduce or prevent environmental impacts to the immediate or wider environment.

Module. A framework consisting of a set of actions that health service organisations can implement to reduce harm and improve the safety and quality of service delivery.

Resilience. The ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate.

Sustainability. Fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations, while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social wellbeing.

System. The resources, policies, processes and procedures that are organised, integrated, regulated and administered to accomplish a stated goal.

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