

10 SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS FOR 2020

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's ambition is to be a leading environmentally sustainable health organisation. Our SESLHD Sustainability Committee and Executive are working towards major initiatives such as carbon accounting, more sustainable procurement and energy projects, but much of our environmental impact comes from actions that our 11,000 staff take every day - **what you do makes a big difference.**

The waste hierarchy is Reduce (first priority), then Re-use, then Recycle. This year our theme will be **REDUCE:** across a range of areas), so here are our Top 10 sustainability actions for 2020.

1 Keep our patients and communities well.

"The greenest health system is one in which people don't get sick in the first place!"

Actions to keep people healthy, such as vaccination programs and schemes to improve community wellness, social capital, patient empowerment, healthy ageing etc, all *reduce* illness and service demand.



2 Work towards zero waste in tea-rooms and offices.

Reduce or eliminate bins! Use a KeepCup and a reusable water bottle, lunch container, cutlery and crockery. Take food scraps home (for your compost or worm farm) or, where appropriate, set up a kitchen garden at work.

Work with your team to ensure that waste is being appropriately segregated: clinical waste has much higher financial and environmental costs. Work with your facility waste manager towards recycling one clinical product. In 2020, we hope to be able to recycle PVC, Kinguard and some metals.



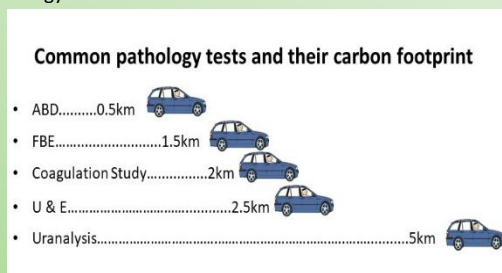
3 Eat more plant-based foods and less meat.

Reducing meat consumption is good for your health and the planet.



4 Reduce unnecessary tests and procedures.

Unnecessary investigations and procedures have harms and risks to the patient and costs (both financial and environmental cost) for SESLHD. The graphic shows the environmental cost of common pathology tests.



5 Prudent prescribing.

Pharmaceuticals are almost 20% of the health sector's carbon footprint. Medications have risks including side-effects and drug interactions, particularly for the elderly. Senior doctors should also regularly review medications and de-prescribe wherever possible.



6 Consider sustainability in your clinical decisions.

In one example: respiratory inhalers are some of the most commonly prescribed medications. Dry powder inhalers have a carbon footprint 18 times lower than metered dose inhalers (MDIs).



10 SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS FOR 2020

7 Plant a tree.

Trees provide shade, have a cooling effect, reduce air pollution, hasten patients' recovery times and improve mental health. Green space is associated with increased physical activity, reduced stress, higher social capital and overall lower all-cause mortality. Green prescribing is social prescribing of nature-based interventions.



8

Walk, cycle or use public transport and reduce car use.

This would increase the level of physical activity and reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.



9

Switch off lights, computers and equipment when not in use and at the end of the day.

On the wards, switching off lights and noisy equipment at appropriate times helps patients to rest and sleep.



10

Reduce your personal carbon footprint... ...and be a role model for others.

Check out the *2040* and *Project Drawdown* websites for ideas. Start by switching your web browser to Ecosia, which plants trees for your web-searches.



As a health professional, you all have tremendous influence with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Join a community or health group, examples include: the Climate & Health Alliance (CAHA), Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) and sustainability groups within your professional organisation.

FUTHER READING

- [Green Inhaler](#): Making your inhaler more environmentally friendly.
- [Green Prescribing](#): why you should and how it works!
- [Global Green & Healthy Hospitals](#) (GGHH): SESLHD is a GGHH member! Contact Kate if you would like access to GGHH Connect.
- [Doctors for the Environment Australia](#)
- [Climate and Health Alliance](#)
- For a greener NHS: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/>
- [Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#) (in England)
- [Project Drawdown](#)
- [2040](#)

Our [Environmental Sustainability Plan 2019-2021](#) sets out an ambitious agenda to address our climate risk and improve health, save money and save carbon.

Please send a photo and brief description of your achievements, so that we can share and promote them.

SESLHD Environmental Sustainability Lead: Kate.Charlesworth@health.nsw.gov.au



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District