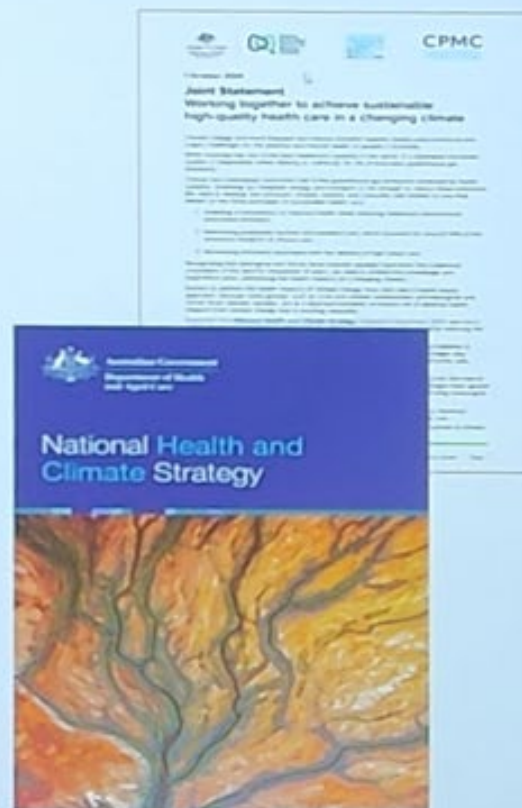


Environmental Sustainability

RACGP 6th Edition
Standards

Policy informing inclusion of environmental sustainability in the Standards

- The **RACGP's position** acknowledges climate change as a key public health concern and commits to promoting mitigation and adaptation strategies in general practice
- In line with:
 - *National Health and Climate Strategy (2023)*
 - *Working together to achieve sustainable high-quality health care in a changing climate*




Why sustainability matters in healthcare and in the Standards

- Climate change is a key public health issue and poses risks to healthcare infrastructure and service delivery.
- Environmentally sustainable measures in a practice can:
 - safeguard public health
 - improve patient wellbeing and satisfaction
 - protect the long-term viability of a practice
 - demonstrate general practice leadership in sustainability.





Welcome

- ▶ Amanda Carver from GCH to talk about the things they have done in this space and provide examples.
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Environmental sustainability is now recognised within the RACGP 6th Edition Standards as part of quality improvement and responsible practice operations.



Sustainability does not need to be “large scale” to be meaningful.



Many environmentally sustainable changes also improve:

efficiency
waste reduction
staff engagement
patient perception
operational costs



The aim today is practical discussion and shared learning.





Table Discussion Framework

Instructions for Tables

Each table will discuss the prompts together. Engagement Officers will support discussion and act as scribes.

Focus on practical and achievable ideas.

Consider both successes and challenges.

Be prepared for one PM from the table to provide a brief summary back to the room.



Reporting Format


- Ask each table representative to briefly report:
- One thing their table is already doing well
- One common challenge identified
- One practical sustainability initiative worth exploring
- One key takeaway from the discussion



What are we already doing well?

Current State

- Recycling programs
- Reducing paper usage
- Digital forms / electronic communication
- Energy-saving initiatives
- Clinical waste reduction
- Sustainable purchasing
- Staff awareness initiatives



Where do we see opportunities for improvement in our practice?

Opportunities for Improvement

- Everyday operational waste
- Printing and consumables
- Appointment systems and patient communication
- Energy and water use
- Procurement and suppliers
- Sterilisation and consumables
- Staff behaviours and culture



What makes sustainability difficult in general practice?

Challenges and Barriers

- Infection control requirements
- Cost pressures
- Staff engagement
- Lack of time
- Limited infrastructure
- Contractor or landlord limitations
- Balancing sustainability with workflow efficiency



Practical Actions

What is one realistic action your practice could implement within the next 3–6 months?

- Small achievable changes
- Measurable actions
- Staff-led initiatives
- Low-cost improvements

Key non-clinical actions for an environmentally sustainable general practice

Workplace culture

Heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC)

Appliances and lighting

Sourcing renewables

Travel

Professional services

Minimise e-waste

Reducing paper usage

Carbon offsets

Water efficiency

Recycling

Waste management

eWaste

Business planning



RACGP Standards Alignment

How can sustainability be incorporated into quality improvement activities?

- Policies and procedures
- Staff education
- QI/PDSA activities
- Accreditation preparation
- Sustainability goals or measurement
- Governance and leadership support

Examples of quality improvement activities

Consider small changes that can be enhanced over time

1. Conduct a baseline environmental audit

- Measure current electricity, water usage, waste output, and procurement patterns and benchmark for future activities.

2. Set and review sustainability KPIs

- Define measurable targets (e.g. 10% reduction in energy usage within 12 months).
- Review these KPIs as a team.

3. Implement a practice-wide recycling and waste reduction program

- Improve waste sorting (e.g. clearly labelled bins for general, recycling, and clinical waste).
- Track volumes of each waste type monthly to monitor improvements.

4. Introduce a sustainable procurement policy

- Use suppliers with eco-certifications or local low-emission delivery options.
- Monitor the proportion of environmentally certified products used in the practice.

5. Measure and increase use of renewable energy

- If possible, switch to a green energy provider.
- Track the percentage of total energy derived from renewable sources and aim to increase it annually.



Wrap Up

- Sustainability in general practice is about progress, not perfection
 - Small operational changes can collectively make significant impact
 - Many sustainability initiatives align naturally with quality improvement
 - Sharing ideas between practices is one of the most valuable outcomes
 - Involve everyone – patients and teams
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