

No. 41: Transforming the health system for sustainability: Environmental leadership through a value-based health care strategy.

27 May 2021

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Sustainability is a complex, multifaceted concept that continues to evolve depending on the perspectives of different sectors and professions and their respective expertise and interests. Fundamental in all conceptualisations, though, is the challenge to shift thinking away from humans and nature being separate in the world, and their activities and effects being compartmentalised.

Transforming the health system for sustainability requires consideration of the systemic and complex nature of climate change as a determinant of health, for today's and future generations. This will require attention to both patient level processes and different framework requirements at each level of the health system.

The strategic framework for value-based health care transformation provides a guide for supporting the consideration of climate change and its impacts on health and health care.

Recommendations

- Environmental sustainability should be encompassed in the national vision and strategy for outcomes-focused, value-based health care in Australia.
- Strong leadership must be demonstrated across the health system through a commitment to meet zero emissions.
- Data-driven improvements in the health outcomes of individuals and populations should be enabled. However, improved health outcomes should not be achieved through care pathways that themselves create poorer health outcomes from their environmental impacts.
- Health workforce strategies and plans must recognise the impact climate change will have on exacerbating health workforce shortages, particularly in rural and remote areas and already vulnerable communities.
- Funding models should be introduced to incentivise environmental sustainability.
- Climate and health research that provides a strong evidence base to support health sector sustainability must be supported.