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## Climate change and health in rural Australia

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### Recommendations

This workshop had delegates from around Australia come up with ideas to tackle some of the impacts of climate change on health:

1. Formation of local action groups in towns/regions (made up of health professionals from various disciplines). These groups could work together to increase the resilience of their community to climate change and health impacts (e.g. drought, bushfire preparedness), work on local sustainability projects (e.g. greening the GP clinic), community education, advocacy. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the groups would assist non-Indigenous people in reflecting on worldviews, approaches, priorities and relationships: if this required payment for services then there would be further benefits to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in recognition of their knowledge and expertise.
2. Advocacy to politicians and the media about the link between climate change and health, and the importance of action to mitigate climate change.
3. Sign on to the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) National Strategy on Climate Health and Wellbeing. They can then encourage politicians to support this strategy.
4. Support the formation of a national EPA and new environmental laws, which will create the framework to properly protect natural systems, clean air, clean water and communities. <http://www.placesyoulove.org>
5. Encourage all health services (hospitals and clinics) to join up with the Global Green and Healthy Hospital network - a free global network that helps health services improve their environmental sustainability.
6. Invest in training of 'planetary health' nurses, doctors and health professionals, who can work to embed concepts of planetary health and environmental sustainability in their workplace.
7. Support the formation of a Sustainable Development Unit, which can work across health services in Australia to improve environmental sustainability and reduce emissions from the health sector (could be modelled off the UK Sustainable Development Unit).

8. Recognise the impacts of climate change on rural communities (e.g. worsening drought in farming communities, or extreme weather events) and prepare for these events by strengthening a range of services e.g. mental health services for drought affected communities, schemes to support diversification of farms affected by drought, regenerative agriculture

## Presenters

**Sujata Allan** grew up in rural NSW near Armidale. After studying medicine at the University of NSW and the rural clinical school at Port Macquarie, she worked in hospitals in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, and is currently completing her GP training working in Blacktown. She has been an advocate for a healthy environment and for climate change action for many years, and is currently on the national management committee of Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA). She has spoken at community events and conferences around NSW and interstate about the impact of air pollution, fossil fuels and climate change on health, and has organised several educational events for health professionals on climate change and health. She was involved in environmental sustainability initiatives at the Children's Hospital at Westmead in 2015 and 2016. She completed the Australian Community Organising Fellowship in 2016. In her spare time she plays banjo and fiddle in an old-time band.

Having graduated in medicine from the University of Tasmania's Rural Clinical School, **Dr Rohan Church** has continued to serve and advocate for the health needs of people living in rural and regional Australia through both his medical career and voluntary work. Alongside undertaking specialist training in emergency medicine, Rohan also works as a clinical lecturer for the UTAS School of Medicine, where his portfolio includes rural health education, mentoring of students from rural backgrounds and providing education on the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. Outside of his medical studies and work, Rohan has been a long-time member of Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA). Whilst serving as Tasmanian Chair for the organisation, Rohan has also helped to establish a mentoring program for medical student advocates within the organisation as well as organising DEA's 10th annual national conference, iDEA, to be held in Hobart in April 2019.

**Rosalie Schultz** studied medicine in Perth before it was a big city. She discovered rural and remote health and a thirst to understand Aboriginal knowledge early in her career and has not looked back. Her experience and expertise cover public health and clinical aspects of communicable and non-communicable disease; injury prevention and safety promotion; cultural safety, white privilege and racism; and community development. As a rural GP and public health physician, Rosalie recognises climate change is the greatest threat to health, and is already increasing morbidity and mortality from communicable and non-communicable disease and injury, and mental health issues. Her research in rural Australia explores the knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal Australians, and opportunities for two-way learning that recognises and builds on Aboriginal expertise. Incorporating both forms of knowledge and tools into climate change mitigation and adaptation provides opportunities for more sustainable development both in Australia and globally.