



Climate Health and Sustainability in Queensland

Policy Position

RDAQ recognises that climate change is a significant health issue with the potential to further exacerbate many of the unique health challenges in our regional, rural and remote communities of Queensland.

RDAQ observes how the extreme weather events and rising temperatures are affecting the physical and mental health of individuals and families, the health workforce, infrastructure and services that communities rely on.

RDAQ recognises the ongoing danger climate change poses. We are committed to improving sustainable and regenerative practices, and advocating for our members, stakeholders and communities. We want to improve responses, to ensure our health and wellbeing now and into the and future.

RDAQ acknowledges its organisational responsibilities in relation to climate change and we are committed to finding ways that we can reduce the impact of our work, with both short and long-term thinking. RDAQ is committed to embedding sustainability into the organisation's work. With a clear and shared understanding about what it means and how it can be applied into the design, development and implementation of work tasks.

RDAQ aligns with and supports all those who ask for climate change to be taken seriously and calls for greater action to reduce carbon emissions.

RDAQ espouses that urgent action is needed from all levels of Government and in all layers of our health systems and structures, and in all forms of their delivery of care.

RDAQ formally supports the position statement of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA). [RDAA Climate and Health Policy Position](#)

Background

The current climate crisis is a reality facing us all. Some of the most impacted communities across Australia are in rural Queensland.

Our beautiful landscapes, environments, community health, livelihoods, and futures are all moulded by our weather trends. Our lives are dramatically altered when we are faced with flooding, bushfire, heatwaves, and cyclone emergencies. These severe weather events are attributed to changing weather patterns because of man-made climate change.

There is evidence demonstrating the public health risk because of climate change is substantial and growing. To be sustainable, our decisions and actions must recognise that our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our planet, our environment, water and skies are interconnected and depend on each other. Sustainable considerations move us away from

worn out, historical ways of thinking and doing. They demand a full appreciation of our place on this planet and for acting in accordance with all our intricate connections.

Due to their isolation and limited access to health services those living in rural and remote communities often face compounded impacts and risks to their health and wellbeing. First Nations people are acutely vulnerable to these health-related impacts.

Rural and remote doctors are on the front line, responding to the impacts of climate change on individuals, families, and communities. There is an urgent need to regenerate our natural systems, to reduce the harm and to build community and health systems which are responsive and accountable.

Principles and strategies to address challenges

RDAQ will adopt the following strategies to enact its commitment to sustainability:

Sustainable work practices

RDAQ is committed to growing, expanding and reviewing its efforts in sustainable work practices and will ensure an environmental perspective informs the way in which the state office and home offices function. This will include:

- Integrated consideration of economic, community and environmental factors.
- Encouraging a refuse, reduce, re-use, compost and recycle consciousness among staff and volunteers.
- Implementing and maintaining recycling and composting as much waste as possible within our offices.
- Working to avoid paper use.
- Working to reduce energy consumption in our offices and in our activities.
- Considering the environmental impacts in the purchasing of goods, sourcing goods with ethical and sustainable production, supply chains, and distribution.
- Develop and implement relevant strategies to mitigate against the negative impacts of the carbon print of meetings and events.
- Considered, purposeful travel in vehicles and utilising carbon offset programs for essential air travel.
- Developing sustainable and regenerative goals for the organisation which meet the needs of members, and our rural & remote communities.
- Developing sustainable and regenerative goals for the development and delivery of the RDAQ annual conference.

Regenerative work practice

RDAQ is committed to adopting a broad, long-term view, combining the systems of business with consideration of our world's living systems. Working to create a healthy organisation, RDAQ will work to develop and incorporate:

- Future generations perspective and thinking, with provision for equity within and between generations.
- A focus on moderate and considered use of resources, to ensure everyone has enough for an adequate life and that community members have equitable access to resources now, and into the future.
- A focus on contributing, rather than extracting and taking.
- A focus on supporting individuals to combine their inner lives and their work lives.

- Including with and for staff, volunteers, all RDAQ members, their families, patients, and communities.

Sustainability education & promotion

RDAQ is committed to keeping climate change included and actively discussed in all operations and activities, and to promote a sense of responsibility, respect, active participation, investigation, empowerment, and a desire for social change. RDAQ will elevate this focus through:

- Encouraging each other to think and act in ways that meet our immediate needs without jeopardising the potential of future generations to meet their needs.
- Developing strategies to encourage and empower our members and communities on the importance of addressing the climate crisis through sustainable and regenerative practices. Specifically focusing on rural health care settings, including general practices.
- Providing and continuing to develop the *RDAQ Climate Health and Sustainability Toolkit* and enable wide access.
- RDAQ will seek to find opportunities for ongoing awareness raising activities for climate change, the environmental and health impacts and potential mitigating measures.

Engagement

RDAQ is committed to an openness for finding new ways, new people and/or organisations to engage with in response to the current and imminent impacts of climate change.

Engagement with others will aim to:

- Improve recognition of custodianship and actively seek advice from First Nations leaders on what is best for the community and country.
- Find innovative ways to engage with rural and remote practitioners, practices, and health services to find improvements in how to address climate change and sustainability issues within their communities and broader health systems.
- Provide guidance, and advocacy and be a contact point for ideas, suggestions, and questions regarding rural and remote sustainable and regenerative practices.
- Partner and collaborate with others to ensure the evolving growth of our sustainable and regenerative practices within RDAQ operations and activities, to benefit our communities and our environment.

Advocacy

RDAQ is committed in its advocacy role and will be inclusive of speaking up for the environment, for all living systems and the importance of fully understanding our interconnectedness. RDAQ will take advocacy measures which include:

- Elevating the recognition of climate change as a current and evolving threat to the health and wellbeing of rural and remote people and communities in Queensland.
- Bringing attention to and making a priority of mitigating against the health impacts of changing weather patterns, adverse weather events, heatwaves, droughts, bushfires, floods and other disasters.
- Appealing for an urgent response by all levels of government in Queensland and Australia, to address both the causes and the consequences of climate change.