

**South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD)
New South Wales, Australia
Developing an Environmental Sustainability Plan (the Plan)**

GGHH Agenda Goals

- Leadership

Health District Goals

- Reduce the carbon footprint of the Health District
- Address climate risks
- Protect and improve health
- Use evidence-based practice in a systematic approach

Progress Achieved

The SESLHD Environmental Sustainability Plan 2019-2021 was completed.

A framework was established, with four themes:

- A sustainable organization
- People and places
- Green healthcare
- High value sustainable models of care



Image source: SESLHD environmental Sustainability Plan 2019-2021, p 14

Key to success is to approach the carbon challenge comprehensively:

- Measure the carbon footprint of the organization/district
- Consult widely to develop a plan
- Develop and obtain approval for a plan
- Build a network of interested staff and similar networks

The Issue

- Climate change is a public health issue
- There are wide ranging negative impacts of climate change on human health
- Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected
- There are international, national and state-level measures to reduce emissions

- The healthcare sector contributes approximately 7% of Australia's carbon footprint
- Hospitals contribute about half of that
- Working at the Health District level can have significant positive impact and provide leadership for other sectors

Sustainability Strategy Implemented

The Health District views environmental sustainability as being closely aligned with its commitment to patient-centered care and a focus on health, wellbeing and prevention of disease. Health organizations appreciate the interdependencies between human health and the environment. The Health District acknowledged that a great deal of sustainability work was already practiced by staff across the Health District. The choice to prepare an Environmental Sustainability Plan was to elevate it alongside other key strategic initiatives, to focus efforts on core areas, to use evidence-based practice to support initiatives, to evaluate and measure progress and to ensure good governance and appropriate reporting mechanisms.

Implementation process

The current Plan builds on the first Environmental Sustainability Plan. It was championed by the Environmental Sustainability Lead staff member. The Plan was informed by academic research, investigations of similar organizations and by individual consultations with almost 40 staff members and consumer representatives.

The Health District created a Sustainability Committee with members from across the organization. This committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Plan. Over 500 staff have attended training in environmental sustainability and have provided feedback as to what areas the Health District should actively pursue.

Tracking Progress

Staff expressed a desire for a clear monitoring mechanism. Measurement, reporting and governance of the Plan rely on the well-developed UK Sustainable Development Assessment Tool (SDAT). The SDAT is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The SDAT checklist is a valuable tool to maintain focus on all areas requiring improvement. The SDAT is applicable to a wide range of users because of its modular design and its capacity to deal with both quantitative and qualitative data. SESLHD will adapt SDAT for the Australian context. The baseline SDAT scores were poor, as predicted, and will now be measured annually from 2020.

In order to focus attention on specific areas for sustainability work, SESLHD has selected ten 'hotspots' to guide their work:

- Corporate Approach– sustainability champions
- Asset Management and Utilities
- Travel and Logistics
- Adaptation
- Capital Projects
- Green Space and Biodiversity
- Sustainable Care Models
- Our People – training
- Sustainable use of Resources
- Carbon / GHGs



Image source: SESLHD Environmental Sustainability Plan 2019-2021, p 2

Challenges and lessons learned

One key to success of the Plan is its 'fit' with the Health District's key strategic plans and with State-level strategic attention to value in healthcare. Also key to success is the attention to building partnership both inside and outside the organization.

The triple bottom line approach is key to progress, but it does require leadership and continuous attention to 'making the case'.

Next Steps

The Health District and Sydney University co-hosted the New South Wales State Sustainability Health Forum which led to a network of Sustainability Leads across the State in recognition of the benefits of working cooperatively.

The Sustainability Committee oversees the work toward meeting the Sustainability SDAT Statements. It reports to the Health District Board twice a year.

SESLHD SDAT scores will now be monitored every year from 2020.

Demographic information

SESLHD covers a geographical area of 468 square kilometers, delivering health care to around 930,000 residents. The Health District services 9 hospitals and a number of community health facilities.

Links

SDAT, UK: <https://www.sduhealth.org.uk/sdat/about.aspx>

SESLHD Sustainability:

<https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/directory/environmental-sustainability>

Quotes:

'The triple bottom line approach is a key to success. So many sustainability actions will improve health, save money and save carbon.' Dr Kate Charlesworth, Sustainability Lead.

'This plan is intentionally ambitious. Our approach is guided by the best available evidence, a sense of pragmatism, and a desire to be a leader in this critical area of health work'. Mr Tobi Wilson, Chief Executive.

Keywords / topics: Leadership; Sustainability Plan; Environmental Sustainability Plan

Submission date: 22 June 2020