



Media Release

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## Hospitals and health services in Australia and New Zealand recognized as 'Climate Champions' in global awards

Health care providers and hospitals in Australia and New Zealand are being recognised internationally for their leadership in greening the health sector and improving global public health by taking action on climate change.

Three local health services scooped five awards in three categories at the global *2020 Health Care Climate Challenge* awards. They are: Koowrup Regional Health Service in Victoria; Mater in Queensland; and Counties Manukau Health in New Zealand.

All are members of the Pacific region of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) network and participants in the 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge.\*

GGHH is an international network of hospitals, health care facilities, health systems, and health organizations dedicated to reducing their environmental footprint and promoting public and environmental health.

The 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge is a GGHH initiative to mobilize health care institutions around the globe to protect public health from climate change.

GGHH Pacific Regional Coordinator Carol Behne said the awards were a demonstration of the changing face of healthcare as health care providers and hospitals all over the world respond in smart and innovative ways to climate change.

“Across the globe, health care providers and hospitals are saving lives and saving the planet,” Ms Behne said. “As global temperatures rise and governments continue to drag their feet on solutions, the health sector is getting on with the job of tackling climate change by reducing their own impacts, developing low carbon models of care, and building resilience to climate change.”

The 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge Awards recognises hospitals, health care facilities, health systems and health organisations that demonstrate hard work and dedication in climate mitigation, resilience or leadership. Around 30 institutions from 23 countries took part in the 2016 awards.

Koowrup Regional Health Service (KRHS) in Victoria won gold in the Climate Leadership category and silver in the Climate Resiliency category for its work in educating staff, patients and the community about the health impacts of climate change. In addition, KRHS has been promoting policies to address climate change adaptation and mitigation in Australia.

Koowrup Regional Health Chief Executive Officer Frank Megens said doctors, nurses and psychologists had an obligation to act when they regularly saw and treated climate-related illness.

“Health care leaders have an ethical obligation to raise their voices to advocate for healthy public policy and support the health sector’s transition to environmentally sustainable and climate resilient health care. We are delighted to receive this recognition for playing our part.”

“District nurses are seeing people with chronic health conditions increasingly suffer in the heat - and we support them to put strategies in place”, said KRHS Community Manager Aileen Thoms. “The indirect risks of climate change - such as bushfires or energy blackouts during heatwaves - not only impact on the community but run the risk of health services being put out of action just when they are needed most.”

Queensland-based Mater was awarded gold in the Climate Resiliency category and silver in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction (energy) category. Sustainability Director Chris Hill said all staff at Mater in all parts of the organisation were helping to cutting waste and pollution.

“Mater has embarked on a wide variety of initiatives across the key themes of energy, water, waste, purchasing decisions, facilities design, transport and stakeholder engagement,” Mr Hill said. “It’s an institution-wide effort that has involved thousands of staff and saved us more than \$4.5 million since 2008.”

Counties Manukau Health (CMH) in Auckland, New Zealand, was awarded silver in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction (non-energy) category. CMDHB has eliminated waste, and cut pollution, in medical gases, paper use and waste disposal.

Counties Manukau Environmental Sustainability Project Manager Debbie Wilson said: “We are committed to making sure we provide the best quality care with the least environmental impact. That means protecting the building blocks of good health: clean air, clean soil and clean water.”

Ms Behne said with 2016 recognised as the hottest year on record, climate champions in the health sector should be celebrated, and supported by broader efforts from all levels of government.

*Climate and Health Alliance ([www.caha.org.au](http://www.caha.org.au)) coordinates the Pacific Region of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network.*

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**\*About the 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge Awards**

Participating institutions pledge to address the three pillars of the Challenge:

1. **Mitigation** – Reducing health care’s own carbon footprint and/or fostering low carbon health care.
2. **Resilience** – Preparing for the impacts of extreme weather and the shifting burden of disease.
3. **Leadership** – Educating staff and the public while promoting policies to protect public health from climate change.