

Co-convenors annual report: November 2019

Alex Macmillan & Rhys Jones

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. We're delighted to bring you this year's co-convenors report, at the end of what has been a significant year for climate & health in Aotearoa. As with every year, it's heartening to reflect on our achievements and exciting to look forward to the coming year's activities, and welcome new members, especially to the Exec Board. We always have some goodbyes to make, which is hard, but it's good to also welcome new energy.

This year we are really excited to welcome a new signatory to our health call to action – the RNZCGP, which represents about 5,000 GPs around the country. Sam Murton has only been president of the college for nearly a year, but has already been demonstrating leadership in the climate change space. Sam started out as a surgical registrar, like me, then moved into General Practice in the 1990s. We welcome her now as our guest speaker this year and look forward to hearing how we can make the most of this new partnership.

Strategic priorities (2019-2021)

In February this year we held our biennial strategic planning meeting in Wellington, involving Exec Board and other OraTaiao members. The new overarching strategic priorities for 2019-21 were identified as:

1. Demonstrate leadership in achieving a climate-resilient net zero emissions health sector.
2. Act for a just transition to a climate-resilient net zero emissions Aotearoa/NZ that improves health and achieves equity.
3. Add our unique health and equity expertise to urgent global climate action.

The following is a summary of actions towards our strategic priorities:

1. Demonstrate leadership in achieving a climate-resilient net zero emissions health sector.

- OraTaiao continues to support and maintain a close relationship with the Sustainable Health Sector Network NZ. We collected signatures from over 900 New Zealand healthcare workers wanting greater action on healthcare sustainability, and presented an open letter to Hon Julie Anne Genter, Associate Minister of Health with the portfolio for climate change and health. The message to the Government was that the health sector is ready to lead NZ to a sustainable and healthy future.
- The second Sustainable Healthcare Forum was held in Wellington in May and was attended by 181 people. It was an extremely successful event, with talks on a wide range of

issues related to healthcare sustainability including the Zero Carbon Bill, green buildings and sustainable procurement. A broader conference on climate change and health, and healthcare sustainability, is being planned for June 2020.

- Since the handing over of the open letter and the forum, the government has produced a guide on 'Sustainability and the Health Sector' (<https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/sustainability-and-health-sector>)
- We made a submission on the Government procurement guidelines - 4th edition, asking for greater focus on sustainability in procurement criteria.
- We have continued to build support within the health sector for climate action and have three new signatories to the call to action on climate change and health: Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists.

2. Act for a just transition to a climate-resilient net zero emissions Aotearoa/NZ that improves health and achieves equity.

A strong Zero Carbon Bill:

- One of our two major campaigns for this year has been advocating for the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill to be strengthened to explicitly reference health, health equity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- To this end we formed a working group that enabled focused meetings on the ZCB.
- We made a written submission, a guide to submissions, and encouraged our members to submit on the Zero Carbon Bill. There were more than 20 written submissions made by health sector organisations based on the guide, as well as from individual members.
- We worked hard with the Environment Select Committee to achieve a health sector focused session during the Zero Carbon Bill hearings, during which OraTaiao made an oral submission together with the NZ Medical Association, NZ Nurses Organisation, Public Health Association and NZ College of Public Health Medicine. By making a coordinated series of submissions the committee had 2 hours to consider health implications and an opportunity to understand joint health sector concerns.
- We organised an event on the steps of Parliament to coincide with the health sector oral submissions at the select committee meeting.
- We wrote to members encouraging them to contact their MPs at key points during the Zero Carbon Bill's parliamentary process.
- We wrote an opinion piece in the Otago Daily Times and released three media statements, which were followed up by a news article and radio interviews. We also used our social media platforms to convey our key messages.
- OraTaiao signed the open letter to pass the Zero Carbon Bill (<http://www.zerocarbonact.nz/open-letter/>)
- The Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill had last-minute cross-party support in parliament and has now become law, enshrining a 2050 zero carbon target, targets to reduce biological emissions and an independent climate change committee. Now the real work of reducing NZ emissions begins and its critical that health continues to have a strong voice as the CCC is set up and begins to design carbon budgets and emissions reduction pathways.

- To that end, we have supported several health professional nominations as potential members of the committee, including Alistair Woodward and Alex Macmillan.

Make healthy sustainable diets mainstream

This year OraTaiao has intensified work to raise awareness about plant-based diets in line with the EAT-Lancet guidelines for sustainable and healthy diets and food systems.

- We have been working in close partnership with Doctors for Nutrition Action, a new health NGO advocating for healthy sustainable diets.
- Sustainable food was part of the health sector sustainability guidelines released by the Ministry of Health this year. There was significant push back from vested interests, particularly the dairy and meat industry. Together with DNA we made our own media responses in support of the guidelines.
- We have had an in-depth article published in Consumer Magazine, and mention in media outlets including Stuff/Dominion Post, Newshub and Radio Waatea on sustainable diets.
- We regularly post on social media about the links between diet, health and climate.
- One of our members, Rebecca Sinclair, has developed a professional development resource on sustainable diets. <https://healthcentral.nz/the-planetary-health-diet-another-fad-or-a-fix-for-our-future/>
- We submitted on the NZ Healthy Food and Drink Guidance consultation, which will guide what foods are served in schools and ECEs.

Other

Fossil fuel industry

- OraTaiao has submitted to the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment asking the government to ensure KiwiSaver providers are divested from the fossil fuel industry.
- OraTaiao has signed the Lofoten Declaration - The call for an end to exploration and winding down of existing stocks combined with a just transition <http://www.lofotendeclaration.org/>

3. Add our unique health and equity expertise to urgent global climate action.

- We continue to be on the Board of the Global Climate and Health Alliance.
- We chose to support the global climate strikes that were initiated by students and timed to coincide with the UN Climate Action Summit. We emailed members, sent out a media statement, posted on social media, created a symbolic 'medical certificate', and organised flyers and placards. Our members turned out in Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin.

- It would be remiss of us not to mention the increasing number of health professionals taking part in acts of civil disobedience around the world in response to the growing climate crisis. As an organisation we again reaffirmed our organisational position not to take part in illegal activities. However, several of us have co-authored a paper providing some ethical guidance for individual health professionals considering civil disobedience. This will shortly be published in the Lancet.

Some other highlights from the year:

- We welcomed three new organisational members: NZ Nurses Organisation, NZ Psychological Society, and NZ College of Midwives.
- Our membership grew to 707 individual members (70 more than last year). However, still only a small proportion currently pay their subscription fee
- Media: Eleven media releases/statements, a large number of radio interviews and news articles (including in the UK's Guardian newspaper), and four opinion editorials (three in Otago Daily Times and one in The Conversation).
- Hayley Bennett and Paula King published an article about health equity and healthcare sustainability in the NZMJ, which had an accompanying editorial by Dr Alex Macmillan and Dr Rhys Jones.
- Te Puawai: The Professional Update for Registered Nurses.
- Increased social media presence: 1,550 followers on Facebook (an increase of 320 from last year and with a policy not use paid advertising) and 1,120 followers on Twitter (an increase of over 200 from last year).
- OraTaiao co-convenors and Executive Board members have given a number of lectures and participated in talks at events including: University of Otago summer school course in Planetary Health, WHO Asia Pacific Region Bioethics Forum, RACS Australasian conference, IUHPE Conference, Hawkes Bay DHB Grand Round, ICTH Conference, Council of Medical Colleges Annual meeting, Healthcare Partnership Forum; Paediatric Society Conference.

Acknowledgements:

- We couldn't do what we do without our members, our co-ordinator and our wonderful exec board
- Thanks to Julia!
- thanks to members and board for their ongoing commitment, energy and enthusiasm
- Particular thanks to board members with big roles – Richare Jaine (Secretary), Mark Smith (Treasurer)
- Thank to Hayley Bennett for continuing in membership role and Graeme Lindsay as web administrator
- Thanks to all the SHSNN network that organised the successful forum and for continuing to encourage health sector to take a lead in sustainability
- Thanks to those who have been active in ZCB *campaigning* and sustainable diets, including Kera, Beck, Anna, Jono, Rebecca Sinclair, Gay Keating, Liz Springford, Louise Delany, Chloe
- Now the most difficult thing is saying goodbye to those Board members stepping down – RHYS, Russel, Lorna, Rowena and Rahul – we will be honouring the contributions of many of our founding members at our 10th anniversary celebrations in 2020.

