

# Australia needs to consider environmental impacts in healthcare decisions and planning

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Australia's healthcare system, like many other industries and services, is a significant contributor to national greenhouse gas emissions. Yet we still don't consistently measure or assess the environmental cost of healthcare design and delivery.

Released today, the latest Issues Brief from the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Limited's Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research, [Consideration of environmental impacts in health technology assessment](#), urges government and industry to take immediate action. It calls for environmental sustainability to be embedded into healthcare decision-making, design and delivery as part of business-as-usual operations.

Co-authored by Deeble Institute Scholar Mr Jake Williams, the Brief identifies Health Technology Assessment (HTA) as a key opportunity to drive this much-needed change. HTA is a critical process used to evaluate the safety, effectiveness, and value of new health technologies. However, environmental impacts are not routinely taken into consideration.

'This is a major gap,' said Mr Tony Farley, CEO of AHHA Ltd. 'We have a clear pathway to include environmental impacts through Health Technology Assessment, but we're not taking full advantage of the opportunity.'

While recognising the complexity of the process, a key priority outlined in the Brief is to implement Recommendation 43 of the federal government's recent HTA Review. The recommendation calls for integrating environmental considerations into assessment processes, and would ensure that sustainability is considered alongside clinical and economic factors when evaluating new health technologies.

To support this shift, rigorous testing of existing methods for incorporating environmental impacts into HTA is necessary. By evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of these approaches, we can identify practical tools and frameworks that work in real-world settings.

Building national capacity is also essential. Investment in high-quality environmental data, particularly through life cycle assessments (LCAs), is needed, as well as investment in workforce training to equip healthcare professionals with the skills to apply sustainability principles.

'Environmental sustainability must become a core part of how we assess and deliver healthcare,' Mr Farley said. 'By embedding environmental considerations into HTA, we can make more responsible, evidence-based decisions that benefit both people and the planet.'

This Issues Brief is supported by the Healthy Environment and Lives (HEAL) Network.

***The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association Limited (AHHA Ltd) is the independent peak membership body and advocate for the Australian healthcare system and a national voice for universally accessible, high-quality healthcare in Australia.***

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