

# Planetary Health for Human Wellbeing

## Policy Position Statement

### Key messages:

Planetary Health asserts that the wellbeing of human civilisation and hence human beings is inextricably connected to that of the other beings with whom we share this planet and depends on well-functioning ecosystems that protect, provide, support and sustain/nourish us.

Protecting and promoting the health of these other species, planetary biophysical systems and ecosystems are essential for humanity to exist, survive and flourish. This is a fundamental public health activity.

### Key policy positions:

1. Human society must operate within the ecological boundaries of the planet.
2. Human population, consumption and waste/pollution patterns and technological developments are critical contributors to human ecosystem impacts.
3. Achieving a safe climate and preserving biodiversity are urgent Earth systems goals.
4. Water and food security are absolutely linked to healthy planetary functions.

### Audience:

Federal, State and Territory Governments, policymakers and program managers, PHAA members, media.

### Responsibility:

PHAA Ecology and Environment Special Interest Group

### Date adopted:

September 2023

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## Policy position statement

### PHAA affirms the following principles:

1. PHAA's complementary constitutional Health Equity Values Statement and Ecosystem and Health Value Statement note:<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and a key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions of society that underpin people's health. The health status of all people is impacted by the social, political, environmental and economic determinants of health. Specific focus on these determinants is necessary to reduce the unfair and unjust effects of conditions of living that cause poor health and disease.
  - b. The Earth's ecosystems have a foundational role in human civilisation, prosperity, health and wellbeing, the nature of humanity's inextricable relationships with the ecosystem of which we are a part. These ecological determinants of health (an Eco-social viewpoint) are entwined with health and wellbeing along with socially determined influences.
2. The cross-cutting principles that ecological sustainability recognises are the rights of future generations<sup>2</sup> and the rights of other species to exist and thrive.<sup>3</sup> These principles are integral to planetary health.
3. The *Global Charter for the Public's Health* calls to promote and protect the environmental determinants of health,<sup>4</sup> and PHAA's own Vision is for a healthy region, a healthy nation, healthy people: living in an equitable society underpinned by a well-functioning ecosystem and healthy environment, improving and promoting health for all: healthy ecosystem – healthy people – healthy tomorrow.<sup>5</sup>

### PHAA notes the following evidence:

4. Planetary Health is "the health of human civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends".<sup>6</sup>
5. Three strands integrate with and overlap planetary health: historical socio-ecological or eco-social models, Ecohealth and One Health.
6. The four converging and inter-related factors that each contribute to human impact on the ecosystem, influence the ecological carrying capacity of our planet from a local to global scale, and provide the focus for this policy suite are – levels of population, consumption, wastes and technology that modulates these factors.
7. Implementing this policy would contribute towards the achievement of [UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing](#), [12 – Responsible consumption and production](#), [13 – Climate action](#), [14 – Life below water](#) and [15 – Life on land](#).

**PHAA seeks the following actions:**

8. Incorporate and promote a planetary health approach to public health that recognises the relationships between human health and healthy functioning planetary ecological systems.

**PHAA resolves to:**

9. Advocate for the above action to be taken based on the principles in this position statement.
10. Implement this overarching position statement with other PHAA SIGs and the Executive by developing and implementing a planetary health suite of policy position statements that address these sub-themes:
  - a. Ensuring sufficient greenhouse gas mitigation and adequate public health related adaptation measures to meet the effects of the impending climate catastrophe
  - b. Protecting ecosystems and promoting a respectful human relationship to the natural environment
  - c. Ensuring water and food security and safety
  - d. Minimising harmful pollutions and wastes
  - e. Promoting ecologically sustainable consumption and use of resources

**ADOPTED September 2023**  
**(First adopted 2019)**

## References

1. Public Health Association of Australia. Constitution and Rules <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/2477>: PHAA; 2017 [cited 2018 14 December].
2. United Nations. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>: UN; 1983 [
3. Boyden S. The Bionarrative: The story of life and hope for the future. <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n1965/pdf/book.pdf>: ANU Press; 2016.
4. World Federation of Public Health Associations. A Global Charter for the Public's Health: The Public Health System: Role, Functions, Competencies and Education Requirements. Geneva, Switzerland: World Federation of Public Health Associations; 2015.
5. Public Health Association of Australia. Strategic Direction <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/1754>: PHAA; [cited 2019 12 April].
6. Whitmee S, Haines A, Beyrer C, Boltz F, Capon AG, Ferreira de Souza Dias B, et al. Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch: report of The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on planetary health. *Lancet*. 2015;386(10007):1973-2028.