Planetary Health

Policy Position Statement

**Key messages:**
The wellbeing of human civilisation is inextricably connected to that of the other beings with whom we share this planet. This is the concept of Planetary Health.

Protecting and promoting the health of these other species and the biophysical systems (ecosystem processes) is essential for humanity to flourish. This is a fundamental public health activity.

**Key policy positions:**
1. Human society must operate within the ecological boundaries of the planet.
2. Achieving a safe climate is one of the most urgent Earth systems goals.
3. Food security is absolutely linked to healthy planetary functions.
4. Human population, consumption and waste/pollution patterns and technological developments are critical components of human ecosystem impacts.

**Audience:**
Federal, State and Territory Governments, policy makers and the general public.

**Responsibility:**
PHAA Ecology and Environment Special Interest Group

**Date adopted:**
18 September 2019

**Contacts:**
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Planetary Health

Policy position statement

PHAA affirms the following principles:

1. PHAA’s complementary constitutional Health Equity Values Statement and Ecosystem and Health Value Statement note:¹

   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 generations² and the rights of other species to exist and thrive.³ 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,⁴ 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.⁵

PHAA notes the following evidence:

4. The historical socio-ecological or eco-social approach is currently evolving into Planetary Health, Ecohealth and One Health strands.

5. The definition of Planetary Health is “the health of human civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends”.⁶

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 steps to be taken based on the principles in this position statement.

10. Implement this position statement through the planetary health suite of PHAA policy position statements that cover these five sub-themes:
   a. Ecologically Sustainable Human Society
   b. Safe Climate
   c. Food, the Ecosystem and Climate
   d. Pollution/waste
   e. Consumption/technology

ADOPTED 2019
References

1. Public Health Association of Australia. Constitution and Rules


5. Public Health Association of Australia. Strategic Direction
   https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/1754; PHAA; [cited 2019 12 April].