

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

DOCTORS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA

Doctors for the Environment (Australia) is dedicated to advocacy and education about the need to conserve and restore the natural environment with a strong focus on the human health impact of climate change and other environmental risks.

Over the past year the organisation has been a strong advocate through the work of many of our members meeting with parliamentarians, through our publications in the medical and mainstream media, through our education campaigns including the influential Green Clinics initiative with the Australian Conservation Foundation, through our partnership with other medical organisations including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Australian Medical Students Association and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, and through our global leadership sharing our initiatives and resources with the member organisations of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE).

The Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr Margaret Chan, recently wrote that, "Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change will affect, in profoundly adverse ways, some of the most fundamental determinants of health: food, air, water. In the face of this challenge, we need champions throughout the world who will work to put protecting human health at the centre of the climate change agenda."

Doctors for the Environment (Australia) is one of these champions and over the past year the members of our organisation have continued to alert doctors and the public in this country on the health effects of environmental degradation and the huge health risks of climate change. Our members have provided advice and support on ways that we can all make a difference in the way we live our own lives, operate our clinics and hospitals, and in the way we provide care and advice to our patients.

Over the past year we have also seen further growth and consolidation of our membership base and we have expanded and strengthened our working relationships with governments, with other medical and environmental organisations and with the media, especially Medical Observer magazine and Australian Family Physician. We welcome all our new members and thank our existing members for their sustained support for our important shared work.

Through the generous support of the Poola Foundation we were able this year to establish a small secretariat to support the growing work of the organisation and to expand our educational and advocacy activities. I thank Guy Webber for his support in the initial establishment phase of our secretariat. We have also strengthened our international links with similar organisations in other countries and have been generous in sharing our efforts in advocacy and education.

Membership organisations rely on the support and commitment of their members. I thank the many members of Doctors for the Environment (Australia) who have provided leadership of our state and territory organisations, in our medical student initiatives, and in our advocacy program with members of parliament. Through the work of our members over the past year, we have been successful in raising national awareness of the health impacts of climate change and other key environmental health issues with many members of the Australian parliament and with many politicians in state and territory government.

My special thanks to the members of the Doctors for the Environment (Australia) Management Committee. Each member has a portfolio of responsibilities and each has made a major contribution to our important work over the past year.

I thank you for your continuing support as a member of Doctors for the Environment (Australia). Together we are making a difference towards preventing the serious health threats of climate change. As always the members of the Management Committee welcome your recommendations and advice and ideas.

I thank the members of the Doctors for the Environment (Australia) for the opportunity and honour of serving as the chair of the Management Committee in 2008-2009.

Professor Michael Kidd AM
Chair
Doctors for the Environment (Australia)

Student members set the pace in 2009

A National Student Committee was formed in 2009. This comprises 13 student members (with 1-2 representatives from each state) with Liz O'Brien as the national representative sitting on the DEA Management Committee. This signifies the integration of student contributions into the mainstream of DEA activity and offers every opportunity for the development and expression of student skills and enthusiasm. In 2009 the National Student Committee held several tele-conferences and an inaugural DEA student conference is scheduled for December 5-7, 2009 in Melbourne.

There has been a surge of medical student activity around the nation in relation to environmental health issues and climate change in particular. DEA provided financial support for Monash University medical students involved in the AMSA "think tank" "Climate: Code Green" initiative. An excellent educational video and brochure have been produced for distribution to medical students across Australia. The DEA web site will carry the video and brochure.

Conferences, workshops and other activity

At the AMSA Global Health Conference in July 2009, at the University of Queensland (UQ), DEA Management Committee members David King and Liz O'Brien ran a stall, collected signatures and spoke to many of the 400 conference delegates. UQ student and DEA member Sean Mitchell organised the environmental components of this conference which included a talk on ecosystems and lecture and workshop with author and sustainability strategist Philip Sutton.

In Western Australia DEA state student representative Sallie Forrest organised a lecture on environmental health given by Management Committee member Irene Kirczenow as part of the University of Western Australia's 'global health short course'. A similar talk was organised in SA by Katya Glogovoska and was addressed by Professor Michael Kidd and planning is underway by NSW student representative Kitty Soutar for one at Sydney University in 2010 with DEA committee member Ben Ticehurst as a speaker. DEA students are also liaising with organisers of the AMSA global health conference in Hobart to promote the DEA cause.

Medical students were engaged in a Climate Change and Health workshop delivered by Graeme Horton and Nick Towle at the National Rural Health Conference in Cairns in May 2009 and DEA student members supported the Australian Youth Climate Coalition's "YOUthdecide" campaign www.youthdecide.com.au

DEA students have participated in the "Visit your Member of Parliament" initiative making the visit alone or with other DEA members. One student member was part of the team to visit Minister Penny Wong.

On the publication front Victorian DEA student representative Evelyn Hamel-Green co-produced a publication in Australian Family Physician with DEA Management Committee members (see Publications) and student member Michael Loftus was instrumental in the creation of the "Climate Code Green" handbook for medical students www.amsa.org.au/climate .

Interaction with Governments and Elected Representatives.

This interaction has been fostered by letters to members and senators in the federal parliament, by submissions to parliamentary committees and with a program to visit large numbers of our elected representatives in their constituency offices.

Visit your member initiative

This initiative commenced in early 2009 and encouraged DEA members including students to visit and brief their federal member or senator on the health aspects of climate change. Already over 50 visits including several to Ministers and parliamentary secretaries have been completed. The Ministers visited by us

included Minister Penny Wong. In general DEA members were well received but in a few cases there was a "too busy" refusal usually from elected representative known not to accept that climate change is occurring. A briefing paper was used for each visit describing the health aspects of climate change together with the DEA position on the CPRS, renewable energy and energy saving. In addition the interests of each member or senator were researched to orientate the meeting. On-going contact has been established with several key Members and Senators. While a welcome start it seems inevitable that government CPRS will prove inadequate to address the urgency of climate change. Accordingly it is likely that the Visit your Member initiative will be continued

Submissions have been made to Parliamentary Committees

This is an important part of our work. It serves the important function of placing before a number of Members and Senators important health and environmental considerations and offers the possibility of appearing before a committee to discuss these issues.

Submission (number 401) to the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy, April 2009

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/climate_ctte/submissions/sublist.htm

Transcript of DEA Presentation to the Senate Committee Select Committee hearing by Dr. Irene Kirczenow

<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commtee/S11983.pdf>

Submission (number 124) to the Renewable Energy Target scheme - exposure draft legislation. February 2009

http://www.climatechange.gov.au/renewabletarget/consultation/sub_ret/submissions_d_l.html

Submission (number 70) to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee.

Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/rrat_ctte/public_transport/submissions/sublist.htm

On Tuesday 21 October DEA representatives made a one hour presentation including questions to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Impact of Peak Oil on SA. The submission can be found at www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Committees/Select/LC/51/PeakOil/SubmissionsReceived/DoctorsfortheEnvironmentAustralia.htm

DEA Submission to Government of South Australia on the proposed Olympic Dam Expansion EIS.

<http://www.dea.org.au/node/323>

DEA Submission to the Government of WA on Genetically Modified Crops <http://www.dea.org.au/node/331>

Submission from Doctors for the Environment Australia, SA Committee on the South Australian Public Health Bill 2009

<http://www.dea.org.au/node/338>

Submission to the Premier of Victoria "Sustainable Hospitals-response to Victorian Climate change green paper" by Forbes McGain and Eugenie Kayak

Medical Observer and DEA collaboration

Medical Observer has continued its award winning Green Campaign, culminating in the "Annual Green Issue" of 5 June 2009. Since the 2008 DEA AGM, over 50 articles have been published in Medical Observer on climate change or other environmental health topics, most of which have been badged with a "Green Issue" logo. DEA has been cited or featured in over 20% of these articles which have included a report on the DEA presentation at last year's WONCA conference in Melbourne, and a full page interview of Michael Kidd entitled "Follow the Leader".

DEA has produced or sourced the following four opinion pieces:

"Hospitals set off on environmental path." Dr Graeme Horton 3 October 2008

"Fight the good fight against climate change." Prof Michael Kidd 6 February 2009

"Our experiment with climate is dangerous." Prof Peter Doherty 5 June 2009

"We need to act on climate change now." Prof David Karoly 12 June 2009

The "Prescription for a Healthier Planet" patient information brochure which was initiated by DEA members George Crisp and Richard Yin has been modified by the Medical Observer art department to produce a

version which is able to be printed from the website. This has now been loaded on the both the DEA and Medical Observer websites.

Educational Activities

DEA has continued to expand its educational role on the health aspects of climate change. Posters, pamphlets articles and participation in meetings are used to deliver our messages.

Educational Posters

The latest poster Economic Growth and Health challenges the logic and health of 'never-ending' and unregulated economic growth, and calls for a renewed examination of true sustainability. The poster and additional explanatory text are available for download from the DEA web site. In September 33,000 copies were distributed and most of these distributed to Australian GPs within the Australian Family Physician mail-out..

Earlier posters on Biodiversity and Health and on Less Drive Time, More Alive Time continue to have a wide exposure with use in other countries and requests for copies from schools and youth groups in Australia and in Europe and North America.

Documentary "Telling the Truth"

DEA committee member Nick Towle is one of several DEA members to have undertaken training with Al Gore to deliver a version of his 'Inconvenient Truth' slideshow. As an additional element to the training session, the Climate Project team chose to capture the experiences and lives of several presenters and create a documentary, and Nick is one of those featured. The documentary is called 'Telling the Truth' and premiered with a green carpet launch in Sydney in late October and is reported in Medical Observer "The Green Issue" on 28.11.08. To receive your copy of the documentary go to ["http://www.connectors.acfonline.org.au"](http://www.connectors.acfonline.org.au)

Summary of the Treasurer's Report for the financial year 2008 - 2009

At the AGM in Melbourne in October 2008 it was decided (after canvassing the membership) to increase the membership fee to \$150 for 'ordinary' members, \$75 for retired, low income or junior hospital doctors and to introduce a \$10 fee for medical students. This has resulted in an increase in both the membership income and donations to the DEA Fund to employ an Executive Officer.

The DEA Fund also received a generous grant from "The Poola Foundation – Tom Cantor Fund" – of \$50,000 to assist with the employment of the Executive Officer as well as other office assistance when and if needed.

As a result of this the **Operating Surplus** for year ending June 2009 is \$81,056 (compared to \$5227 for year ending June 2009).

Please see the 'Income and Expenditure Statement' for more details.

The current membership numbers show an increase of approximately 10% from the previous year. This is encouraging in view of the possibility of greater attrition with the increase in membership fees.

John Stokes Honorary Treasurer

Health and Sustainability summit

During 2009 work has progressed on this meeting planned for March 2010 in Sydney It is designed to have a national focus and bring together leaders in government, business, academia and civil society to collaborate on generating realistic solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and other related environmental and health issues. The summit will be designed and supported jointly by DEA, Institute of Sustainable solutions (University of Sydney) and the Oxford Health Alliance. We have developed a website and a conference brochure, and are currently trying to secure sponsorship and resource people for the key themes.

Attendance will be by invitation, and interactive sessions rather than lecture format are designed to facilitate the development of shared and realistic solutions to the challenges presented.

Poola Challenge Grant

As indicated in the message from DEA Chair, Professor Michael Kidd DEA has received a Challenge Grant from the Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund) towards the employment of administrative staff. This is an important development for DEA and will allow us to increase our activities. We thank the Poola Foundation for their generous contribution.

State committees and newsletters

DEA members are coming together within states to promote activities within the aegis of DEA policy. In Victoria there have been 5 state newsletters written by Jacinta Halloran and a range of activities. In Queensland a newsletter has been commenced by David King. Western Australia has a long standing state Committee at present being renewed after the departure of Bill Castleden and Irene Kirczenow. In South Australia a committee has been formed with Tiana Della Putta as Chair and Darren Briggs as secretary.

Management Committee

Three members of the Committee have retired from the Committee. Colin Butler has been a member of the Committee as a representative for Tasmania since DEA was formed in 2001 and has been integral in guiding several of our policies. We thank Colin for his sustained and valuable contributions. Irene Kirczenow, a representative from WA has played a significant role in organising plans for web site reform and for DEA activities in her state as a member of the WA state committee. Dr David Strong, a representative from Tasmania has worked hard to provide us with important input on childhood health issues. Our thanks to them; we will miss our association with them.

Publications

Blashki G, Berry H, Kidd MR. 2009 Primary Health Care Responses to Climate Change. in Moss J (editor). *Climate Change and Social Justice*. Melbourne University Press, pp:144-167. (ISBN: 1 875978 48 8)

Hamel Green E, Blashki G, Berry H, Harley D, Horton G, Hall G. 2009 Preparing Australian Medical Students for Climate Change. *Australian Family Physician* vol:38: no:9

Kidd M, Shearman D. 2009 Climate change a worry for the doctors. *The Australian*, October 13th www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24751826-23289,00.html

King D. 2009 Think of the earth's health as your own. *Medical Observer* June 19th, p:21

King D. 2008 Eco-banners (x 2) in the RACGP publication *GP Review*. (Sept & Nov)

McGain F, Blashki GA, Moon KP, Armstrong FM. 2009 Mandating sustainability in Australian hospitals. *Medical Journal of Australia* 190 (12): pp:719-720.

McGain F, Hendel SA, Story DA. 2009 An audit of potentially recyclable waste from anaesthetic practice. *Anaesthetic Intensive Care* 37: pp:820-823

Rowe L, Kidd MR. 2009 Our relationship with our physical environment. in: Rowe L, Kidd MR(authors). *First do no harm: being a resilient doctor in the 21st century*. McGraw-Hill, (ISBN: 978 0 070276 97 0).

Shearman D. 2009 Doctors on global warming: it's about health and security. <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/10/19/doctors-on-global-warming-its-about-health-and-security/>

Shearman D. 2009 A people's bank needed to save the rural sector. <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/07/09/a-peoples-bank-needed-to-save-the-rural-sector/>

Shearman D. 2009 Climate change and the rural community. Published in *Rural Health Matters*, April p:11 <http://www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/go/about-us/publications/rural-health-matters>

Shearman D, Wayne Smith J, Positano S, Stocks N. 2009 *A New Way of Thinking About Our Climate Crisis*. The Edwin Mellen Press, New York

Conferences, Talks and Lectures

Blashki G. 2008 Population growth, urban concentration, vulnerable populations and regions worldwide. Climate changes and changes in epidemiology. Les Pensieres. Lake Annecy France 24- 26 November

Blashki G, Capon T. 2008 Climate change and health- risks, research and responses. Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association 2008 Congress. September 25th

Blashki G. 2009 Current climate change trajectory for Australia and health impacts. Communities in a changing climate: Social and equity impacts of climate change and the community sector. Victorian Council of Social Services and The McCaughey Centre, Karstens at CQ, Melbourne 25th February

Blashki G, Horton G, McGain F. 2009 Environmentally sustainable health care. Green Hospitals Conference. Melbourne. 24th May

Horton G. 2009 Climate change and health impacts for Australia. Valley to Coast GP Training, 20th March

Horton G. 2009 Climate change and the health of ageing Australians: an interactive workshop. Australian Association of Gerontology Rural Conference. Broken Hill 2nd April

Horton G. 2009 Healthcare and climate change. Wentwest GP Training Day 12th September

Horton G. 2009 Healthcare and climate change. Invited presentation at Australian Health Congress, Sydney 30th September

David King is on the organising committee for Earth Charter 10th anniversary conference and celebration, Australia/ Pacific Region. Brisbane, September 2010, as a representative of DEA

David King and DEA Student representative, Liz O'Brien. Fixed display and stand at the July 2009 AMSA Global Health Conference, Brisbane.

Irene Kirczenow 2009 presented a paper "Climate Emergency" at the Greener Hospitals, SITA Environmental Solutions Conference. Royal Perth Hospital October 21st

Towle N, Horton G. 2009 The Role of the Health Sector in Mitigating Climate Change. National Rural Health Conference, Cairns 20th May

Towle N. 2009 Climate Change and Medical Curriculum. Tasmanian University Department of Rural Health, Climate Change and Rural Tasmania Forum. World Environment Day 5th June

Towle N. 2009 Climate Change and Health. University of Tasmania medical student lecture. 23rd September

Media, Press, Interviews

Graeme Horton Tunnel pollution leaks 'toxic cocktail' on residents. Sydney Citynews April 16, 2009

David King. Joint press release with MAPW regarding the environmental impacts of military exercises and the military in general. Designed to coincide with the Talisman Sabre joint Australia/ USA war exercise in Central Queensland, July 2009.

David King Two radio interviews about the above press release – Central Queensland local ABC radio and an Adelaide FM station.

David Shearman was interviewed on ABC North and West on the Health aspects of the Olympic Dam Expansion 25.8 2009

David Shearman Hon Secretary 25.10 2009

