

Towards environmentally sustainable healthcare: a new frontier for dietitians

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BACKGROUND

- Healthcare contributes 7% of Australia's total carbon footprint (Malik, 2018). Urgent transition is needed towards environmentally sustainable health systems (MacNeill, 2021).
- Foodservices is an important part of this transition. A lack of dedicated personnel has been identified as a barrier to achieving environmentally sustainable foodservices (Carino, 2021).
- Dietitians are well placed to create change in this area, but traditional clinical and foodservice roles have not typically encompassed environmental sustainability considerations.

WHAT WE DID

- Established a new 'Sustainable Food Systems Dietitian' role Eastern Health, a large metropolitan multi-site public health service in Victoria
- The aim of the role is to embed environmental sustainability within foodservices at Eastern Health
- Roles and responsibility were based on the 7 action components (displayed below) for formulating multidimensional solutions outlined in the 'Individual plus Policy, System & Environmental Conceptual Framework for Action' (Tagtow 2021).

ABOUT THE ROLE:

- 0.2 FTE, Grade 2
- Accredited Practising Dietitian
- Undertaking PhD in environmentally sustainable hospital foodservices, prior clinical experience
- Reports to Dietetics Department, involved with Sustainability Committee and Foodservice Leadership Committee

To watch a video presentation on this role, scan the QR code:



PROGRESS SO FAR:



- Social media campaign to promote role
- Stop Food Waste Day display in foyer and social media campaign to increase knowledge in preventing food waste and share the Eastern Health's achievements to date
- Upskilling dietitians on environmentally sustainable + healthy diets to incorporate into patient nutrition education
- Food waste activity for foodservice placement students to consider causes and solutions
- Working towards organisational membership with Global Green and Healthy Hospitals
- Foodservice quality improvement projects – food and packaging waste audits, reuse of oral nutrition supplements
- Policy scoping project to guide advocacy efforts
- Introductory meetings with key stakeholders (eg Department of Health)



IMPLICATIONS

- The role of health professionals working within hospitals can be reimagined to encompass environmentally sustainable healthcare.
- Future health professionals must engage in work using multidimensional strategies with systems orientation.
- Building the capacity of all hospital work roles to encompass environmentally sustainable healthcare will ensure ongoing resourcing.

Please get in touch with any questions or feedback: stefanie.carino@easternhealth.org.au

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