



# HEAL

**2025 NEWSLETTER  
FIRST EDITION**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first edition of the HEAL newsletter in 2025.

After a revitalising summer break, we had a busy start of the year and some very exciting news for the HEAL Network.

Four new research projects led by HEAL investigators have been funded by the NHMRC Targeted Call for Research into climate-related health impacts and effective interventions to improve health outcomes, led by Veronica Matthews, Supriya Mathew, Brad Farrant and me.

One new NHMRC Health Services Research grant focusing on healthcare environmental sustainability, led by Forbes McGain, was also funded.

Huge congratulations to all investigators involved in the successful grants, and to all other researchers who submitted applications to these very competitive funding rounds. Please see more information about these grants in the newsletter.

A new research funding call focusing on mental health and climate change is currently open ([MRFF Global Health Initiative 2025](#)).

In January, we completed the Clean Energy for Healthy Environments and Lives (CE4HEAL) project, funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade International Climate Change Engagement Program. I would like to thank all HEAL investigators, and our colleagues from the Indian Institute of Madras, involved in this project. Read more about the project and its finding on page 5 of the Newsletter.



The new **HEAL Early- & Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) Mentorship Program** is now open for 2025 and taking Expressions of Interest to match self-nominated mentees and mentors from across the HEAL Network.

The 2025 Mentorship Program will close on 1st April 2025 and, we will aim to match pairs and inform them by 1st May 2025. The program is designed to run for 12 months. Please express your interest to participate as a mentor or mentee in this [program](#).



We have a very busy year ahead with the launch of the new research projects, an in-person HEAL Leadership Executive meeting and the second edition of our **Future Leaders School** in Canberra in May, see below.

A special thank you to our colleague Daniela Espinoza Oyarce, who will be leaving HEAL at the end of the month.

Warm wishes,

Sotiris Vardoulakis

**KEEP AN EYE OUT EMCRS: HEAL FUTURE LEADERS SCHOOL 2025  
(19-23 MAY 2025)**

A formal call for the HEAL Future Leaders School (FLS) applications will be launched in mid-March 2025. Building on the FLS of 2024, FLS 2025 will deliver a unique and distinctive impact. The FLS 2025 promises to be novel, engaging, interactive, and energising in its approach. There will be expert panels, roundtables, classroom lectures, problem-based learning, joint sessions with the HEAL Leadership Executives, site visits and more.

There are limited spaces for HEAL-funded and affiliated EMCRs are encouraged to apply once applications are open. So keep an eye out for updates on the HEAL Network FLS 2025 webpage and HEAL Network socials!



# HEAL Communities of Practice (CoP) Meeting Highlights

## South Australia (SA) CoP

The SA CoP Regional Hub meeting kicked off on 14 February 2025 with a sense of enthusiasm and renewed energy. This year's theme of Securing Human Health in a Growing Adelaide, focused on water security, healthy built environments and policy advancement.

The event drew on its strong local expertise in water with invited speakers Prof. Lin Crase (UniSA), Dr Ben van Den Akker (UniSA) and Dr NgaiNing Chen (SA Water), providing a comprehensive overview of Adelaide's water management for health and security. These talks highlighted the various approaches to water management in South Australia and gave an insight into the unique economic and regulatory framework which guides this management.

We were fortunate to have interstate HEAL members Prof Xiaoqi Feng (UNSW) and Dr Ro McFarlane (UC) join the event. Xiaoqi provided an exuberant and comprehensive demonstration of the positive health links of spending time in green space. Ro brought her extensive knowledge of sustainable development and nature-based solutions, providing amazing insight into potential areas for policy advancement both nationally and for SA. To round out the conversation on healthy built environments. Prof. Veronica Soebarto (Uni. Adelaide) provided important insight into the shortcomings of modern developments and potential nature-based solution particularly in relation to heat mitigation. The event ended with a panel discussion focused on best practises to ensure evidence-based policy making, particularly in relation to human health in urban planning.

Overall, the event identified a number of opportunities for driving policy change, as well as highlighting some of the fantastic initiatives which have already taken place in South Australia. And as we were very eloquently reminded by panellist Prof. Kirsten Ross (Flinders University), "we should celebrate what has already been achieved particularly in relation to public health and urban environments, as well as looking to how we can improve it in the future'.



## Australian Capital Territory (ACT) CoP

The ACT CoP held its first meeting this year on 31 January 2025 (online).

The team received very positive feedback from ACT members on the HEAL2024 Regional Hub meeting, particularly our focus on vulnerable groups. The CoP members also discussed outcomes and next steps, including the draft 'ACT COP Needs Assessment and Community Resilience Plan' which is an output that each regional HEAL CoP will produce.

The ACT draft reflects the diversity of presenters and stakeholders that have attended each annual or biannual meeting, and the material generated from the associated table discussions. Discussions focused on pathways in making such a document resourceful and on other products such as briefs and factsheets, that the ACT HEAL CoP can produce over 2025-26 to support the ACT Government and the region.

## HEAL Regional Hub Highlights

### Victorian Hub

Did you know that the World Health Organization (WHO) COP29 special report on climate change and health has a section dedicated to housing?

The report shows that the climate crisis is also a health crisis, driving health losses across all categories of disease. Importantly, it recognises that climate change interacts with housing, exacerbating threats posed by multiple determinants of health.

Research by [Ang Li](#), [Mathew Toll](#) and [Rebecca Bentley](#), cited in this report, brings attention to the critical role that housing has in protecting people and communities from the health impacts of climate change and climate disasters as well as the burdens that accrue when housing is insecure, unaffordable, or unsuitable for human health.

From energy hardship and thermal discomfort to unaffordability and tenure insecurity, climate change increases the risk of housing vulnerability. We found the negative health effects of climate disasters were greater for people who, prior to the disaster, had housing affordability stress and lived in poorer quality housing. Read the **report** for further insight.

*Upcoming events and meetings:*

11am - 12pm, April 29 via Zoom - Victoria CoP presentation by Brendan Condon, contact Alex Flynn ([alex.flynn@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:alex.flynn@unimelb.edu.au)) to get the Zoom details.



**BRENDAN CONDON**

**DIRECTOR**  
AUSTRALIAN ECOSYSTEMS  
BIOFILTA  
THE SUSTAINABLE COFFEE COMPANY  
MELBOURNE SKYFARM  
THE CAPE SUSTAINABLE HOUSING PROJECT



## Highlights on HEAL Projects

The **Clean Energy for Healthy Environment and Lives (CE4HEAL)** project, funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has successfully completed its three-year mission. CE4HEAL addressed energy inequities and environmental health challenges in the context of climate change in rural and remote communities of Central Australia and South India. The project promoted solar energy adoption to reduce reliance on polluting fuels like biomass and diesel, along with raising awareness about clean energy's triple benefits: improved health, economic savings, and environmental sustainability.

Through collaboration with researchers, policymakers, and Indigenous communities, CE4HEAL engaged Aboriginal groups in Central Australia and rural households in South India using culturally resonant strategies such as participatory yarning sessions, school competitions, and Indigenous artwork. The project identified key challenges, including large upfront costs and bureaucratic barriers in Australia and highlighted enablers like government renewable energy targets and community-led ownership models. In India, it emphasized the health risks of biomass dependence while leveraging national solar subsidies to promote cleaner alternatives.

**A FUTURE WITH SOLAR ENERGY**

**A PATHWAY TO EQUITY, HEALTH, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN AUSTRALIA**

Category	Benefit
HEALTH BENEFITS	Reduces indoor air pollution, lowering respiratory diseases.
ECONOMIC SAVINGS	Lowers household energy costs, reducing diesel or biofuel (wood, crop waste) dependency.
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	Cuts greenhouse gas emissions, fighting climate change.
ENERGY INDEPENDENCE	Strengthens energy security for rural areas.

BARRIERS	ENABLERS
High upfront costs	Financial incentives
Government hurdles	Government renewable energy targets
Limited maintenance support	Community-led solar power projects

**CE4HEAL RECOMMENDS:**

- Integrate local & Indigenous knowledge in clean energy projects.
- Address energy demand variability with battery solutions.
- Streamline approvals and expand financial incentives.
- Engage local communities in energy policy decisions.

LEARN MORE

Logos: UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY, THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, anzies, University Centre for RURAL HEALTH, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

With multiple peer-reviewed publications, international conference sessions, workshops, and stakeholder engagement activities, CE4HEAL provided valuable insights into promoting clean energy adoption in remote communities. Strengthened Australia-India partnerships through researcher exchanges and joint academic initiatives, the project showcased solar energy's potential to improve health, empower communities, and support global climate commitments, leaving behind a legacy of scalable solutions for a sustainable energy transition.



## Highlights on HEAL Projects

The Australian Research Council Linkage project **Healthy, Equitable and Sustainable Urban Mobility: Promoting Active Travel And Public Transport for a Post-Pandemic World** held a workshop at Transport for NSW on January 28, 2025, as part of the dissemination of research outcomes from project Strand 2 (led by USYD). The project addresses the intersection between public health, built environment and sustainable travel policies by focusing on the realignment of space devoted to walking, cycling, public transport and driving modes.

The study investigates the role that interventions to promote sustainable travel choices can play in promoting a shift towards transport practices and data collection. It includes traffic observations, a user survey, and focus groups, conducted based on three selected case study sites of active travel infrastructures in Sydney (Moore Park pop up cycleway, Bennelong Bridge and the North Ryde to Macquarie Park shared path).

Bringing together over 20 participants from advocacy groups, academia, and local and state government, the interactive workshop presented project key findings from last year and actively engaged attendees in small-group discussions on policy scenarios for promoting active travel.

This workshop facilitated valuable exchanges among experts and provided critical insights that will contribute to the development of project Strand 3 (led by UC), which will explore the policy implications of active travel measures with a strong emphasis on public health.



Walking



Running



Scooting



Cycling



E-biking

**ACTIVE TRAVEL**



**HEAL**

## Taster of HEAL Network Publications

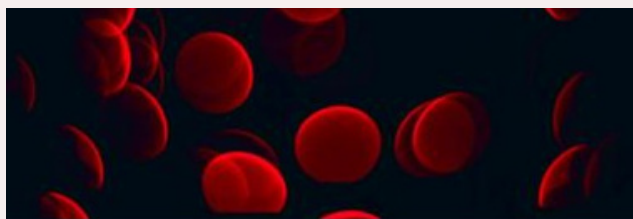
- Dr Sharon Campbell and her team commented in their recent publication in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, that there is very limited published evidence evaluating community cleaner air spaces (CCASs). This includes the establishment of CCASs, use, its effectiveness (both for reducing exposures and improving health outcomes) and their reach into higher-risk populations. Few guidelines exist to assist government agencies to set up a CCAS and how to effectively communicate their benefits to the community. The research calls for prioritisation of further research on CCASs and the establishment of a research translation partnership between researchers and public health professionals to determine the feasibility, effectiveness, scalability and sustainability of this response. For more details read '[Community cleaner air spaces during landscape fire events: What do we know?](#)'.
- Dr Richard Larsen and the team conducted a systematic review of the literature to answer the question- 'Which behavioural interventions increase commuter cycling?' Published in the [Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour](#), the research revealed that personalised travel plans and mobile phone-based platforms were the most common interventions. Unvalidated travel surveys were the most widely used mode of data collection. The review highlighted the need for more high-quality behavioural science research into active travel to increase levels of commuter cycling, which would subsequently improve environmental and human health.
- Libraries play a key role in promoting the health of people and planet in the community because they are a trusted, safe, and supportive community setting. The [Healthy Me., Healthy Planet: Evaluation of a pilot planetary health library program](#) report found libraries were a curator of credible and reliable evidence-based information on health and planetary topics and a local and free provider for skills and literacy development. Published in the Health Promotion Journal of Australia, Dr Rebecca Patrick and colleagues recommended that this program be expanded to other library settings to enhance community connection and support local planetary health initiatives.
- Research team led by Ms Oriana Ruffini, developed Local Food Systems Policy Index tool and assessment processes for creating healthy, equitable and environmentally sustainable food systems. Published in the [Public Health Nutrition Journal](#), these processes offer a comprehensive mechanism to assist local governments in benchmarking their policy actions to improve the healthiness, equity and environmental sustainability of food systems and prioritise action areas.
- Urban Green Spaces (UGS) have been proven to have positive contributions to human health & cost benefits. Professor Craig Williams and his team published in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#), policy-based solutions for UGS achieved by implementing the Health in All Policies approach. The Health in All Policies approach will support the whole government decision making and lead to embedding agreed standards within legislation and regulation, with financial incentives to support these valuable green spaces.
- Dr Tom Swan and his team published a review article on the "[Linkages between Soil Security and One Health: implications for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#)" in Frontiers in Public Health. They evaluated and found that the roles of these two concepts are highly complementary fields of scientific inquiry and have solid leverage for translation into policy and practice. In Frontiers Linkages, they recommended that there needs to be a defined One Health dimensions, as has been done for Soil Security, along with a biosphere-focused framework to collectively make progress toward the 2030 SDGs.



## Congratulations - 2024 Centre for Safe Air Seed Funding recipients

- Dr Nigel Goodman and colleagues for their project: 'Air filtration as a public health intervention to reduce exposure to wood heater smoke and improve asthma outcomes'. This project will investigate the effectiveness of air purification as a public health intervention aiming to reduce indoor air pollution & asthma deterioration in Australian homes and start translating into policy & practice.
- Dr Sharon Campbell and colleagues for their project, 'Improving the health of at-risk Australians: Co-designing a Bushfire Smoke Health Plan'. The template will be used by those vulnerable to poor health during bad smoke events. Working with Professionals and people most affected, a co-designed template will be developed with the aim to be ready for 2025-26 summer.

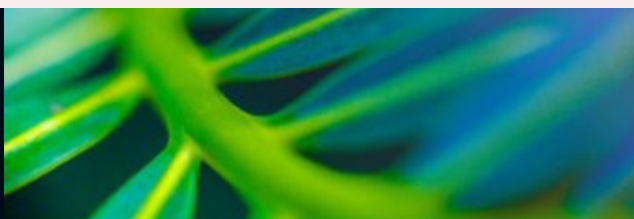
## Funding Opportunities



OPEN

### MRFF – 2025 Early to Mid-Career Researchers Grant Opportunity (GO7553)

MRFF – Early to Mid-Career Researchers Initiative – 2025 Early to Mid-Career Researchers Grant Opportunity



OPEN

### MRFF – 2025 Mental Health and Climate Change Grant Opportunity (GO7541)

MRFF – Global Health Initiative – 2025 Mental Health and Climate Change Grant Opportunity



Everyday  
climate  
choices



**Community Zero  
Emissions Grants**  
Applications now open



💡 Do you have an innovative idea for tackling climate change and promoting sustainability in the ACT?

🌱 The ACT Government can help you make your idea a reality with funding through the Community Zero Emission Grants program.

👉 Find out more and start your application at [www.climatechoices.act.gov.au/policy-programs/community-zero-emissions-grants](http://www.climatechoices.act.gov.au/policy-programs/community-zero-emissions-grants)

**Upcoming NHMRC Partnership Projects PRC2** - a scheme to provide funding and support to create new opportunities for researchers and policy makers to work together to define research questions, undertake research, interpret the findings and implement the findings into policy and practice.





## Conference and Media appearances

Professor Payi Linda Ford and Associate Professor Supriya Mathew attended Professor Fay Johnston's presentation on 'Savannah burning, smoke and your health', at the sold-out Savanna Fire Forum.

### 2025 North Australia Savanna Fire Forum

2025 was the seventh year of the North Australia Savanna Fire Forum. This important annual event facilitates knowledge sharing and improved understanding and practice within the growing, successful and important Indigenous carbon industry.

**Date:** 18-20 February, 2025


**Location:** Darwin Convention Centre, Larrakia Country

**Theme:** Delivering results for people and planet.

The Forum was held in partnership with Charles Darwin University (CDU), a partnership that reflects the history of this event, which was launched by the [CDU Centre for Bushfire Research](#) in 2019 along with [North Australia & Rangelands Fire Information \(NAFI\)](#), and has been hosted annually by ICIN with support from CDU since 2020.

**Tickets were sold out.**



Dr Ro McFarlane presented at Seminar 2 of the WWF '[Solutions for the Planet's Interlinked Challenges](#)' series. The recording of her presentation on 'Human health is valued universally as an important metric of the quality of life, the quality of what we do, and how we assess'. Health systems and health policies interact with other elements of the nexus and can strengthen the response to climate change, both on the mitigation and the adaptation front. Dr McFarlane was also part of a team who worked with >150 delegates on two key [IPBES](#) reports, first one lays out a framework for transformative change. The second report known as the Nexus assessment, highlights the linkages -biodiversity loss, water quality, food security, health risks & climate change. This work was published in a Conversation article '[We live in times of multiple entwined crises – but our policy responses aren't keeping up](#)'. 

Dr Lucas Hertzog from WHO Collaborating Centre for Climate Change and Health Impact Assessment at Curtin University was interviewed by ABC on mental health risks associated with extreme heat which was featured in this article – "[Violence, frayed tempers and hot weather — is mango madness real?](#)"

#### In short:

"Mango madness" or "going troppo" are phrases used in Australian folklore to indicate someone acting erratically during particularly hot and tropical weather.

Data from police forces across northern Australia shows a mild upswing in assault and property offences in the "hot season".

#### What's next?

Experts say the phenomenon is something Australia needs to take seriously as other countries investigate the impacts of increasing heat on their populations and resources.



## Upcoming events

- Western Pacific Climate and Health Responder Course, 11 March-15 April 2025 online, see the below flyer for more details and to register.
- 47th Environmental Health Australia (EHA) National Conference, 6-8 May 2025, Brisbane. Check out the EHA conference page for more information.
- 4th World Conference on Forests and Parks for Public Health, 21-24 May 2025, Luxembourg. For further information visit the Conference website.
- 2025 CHiAPRT Maximising Impact from Research-Policy Partnerships Masterclass in person in Adelaide on 4-5th August 2025, then a hybrid meeting on 25th August 2025, Check out below for further information.



47th EHA National  
Conference  
6-8 May 2025  
Hotel Grand  
Chancellor,  
Brisbane

**Expression of Interest**  
**2025 Research-Policy Partnerships Masterclass**

**SECURE YOUR PLACE** - Learn how to navigate the complex interface between research and policy and have an impact!

Scan the QR Code or [Click Here](#) for early-bird status!

CHIAPRT  
Centre for Health in All Policies  
Research Translation



FREE, CERTIFICATE-BASED COURSE

## WESTERN PACIFIC CLIMATE AND HEALTH RESPONDER COURSE



March 11 - April 15, 2025  
Tuesday & Thursdays  
12:00-1:30 PM Australia  
Eastern Standard Time

### ABOUT

Climate change is a health issue that impacts society's ability to deliver healthcare and support healthy living. It poses significant health risks in the Asia Pacific Region, from diseases to environmental impact such as drought, air pollution, wildfires, and extreme weather events such as typhoons and cyclones.

This course is designed to equip health professionals in the Western Pacific region to identify, communicate, and respond to climate-related health impacts. Through expert-led lectures and case studies, this 10-week course will deliver comprehensive information on climate science and health impacts, advocacy, adaptation, and health system resilience.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

- **MAR 11** : Climate Change for the Health Professional
- **MAR 13** : Degraded Air Quality
- **MAR 18** : Extreme Weather Events and Disasters: Typhoons and Flooding
- **MAR 20** : Temperature Related Illness and Mortality
- **MAR 25** : Climate Extremes, Agriculture, Food and Water Security
- **MAR 27** : Vector-borne and Zoonotic Disease and Climate Change
- **APR 3** : Climate Change and Mental Health
- **APR 8** : Health System Adaptation and Resilience in a Changing Climate
- **APR 10** : Health Co-Benefits of Climate Action
- **APR 15**: Advancing Climate Justice Through Climate Change Communication, Engagement, and Advocacy

ALL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS INTERESTED IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH ARE WELCOME!



**HEAL**

## Research Jobs / Opportunities

Exciting Research Opportunities for Climate Change and Health Impact Assessment at Curtin University, Western Australia. They are recruiting three Research Fellows/Associates for full-time positions for two years to join our dynamic team at the **WHO Collaborating Centre for Climate Change and Health Impact Assessment** School of Population Health, Curtin University. Open Positions:

**Job 1: Research Fellow/Associate – Health Economics Burden in Health Impact Assessment**

**Job 2: Research Fellow/Associate – Burden of Disease in Health Impact Assessment**

**Job 3: Research Fellow/Research Associate – Exposure Science.**

Closing Date: **March 18th, 2025**. Note: Positions may be filled before the closing date, early applications are strongly encouraged.



**“Are you ready to explore a career in research? Start your journey with the UQ Poche Centre”**

Pathways Program to a PhD: Doing Research for Mob is a three-day intensive program designed for Indigenous professionals interested in further study. Hosted by the UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, the program covers everything from PhD applications and Indigenous research methodologies to networking and career pathways.

Program dates: **19-21 August 2025**

Location: The University of Queensland, St Lucia and Toowong Campuses.

Applications aren't open yet, but we are currently accepting expressions of interest.

Find out more at the [Pathways Program to a PhD Website](#) or contact [poche.hdr.pathways@uq.edu.au](mailto:poche.hdr.pathways@uq.edu.au) to learn more.

## Fundraising Appeal

A/Prof Michelle Lupton at QIMR Berghofer and works along with Prof Tony White and collaborates with HEAL member, Associate Professor Geoff Morgan is seeking funding as part of our Institute's summer appeal to assist her research study into the potential link between bushfire smoke exposure and brain health, with a focus on dementia risk.

The fundraising campaign is directed towards public donors where all proceeds of the appeal will directly fund the research study. For further on information about the appeal go to <https://www.qimrberghofer.edu.au/clear-the-air-appeal/>.



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