

Healthy patients, workforce and environment

Coupling climate adaptation and mitigation to wellbeing in healthcare

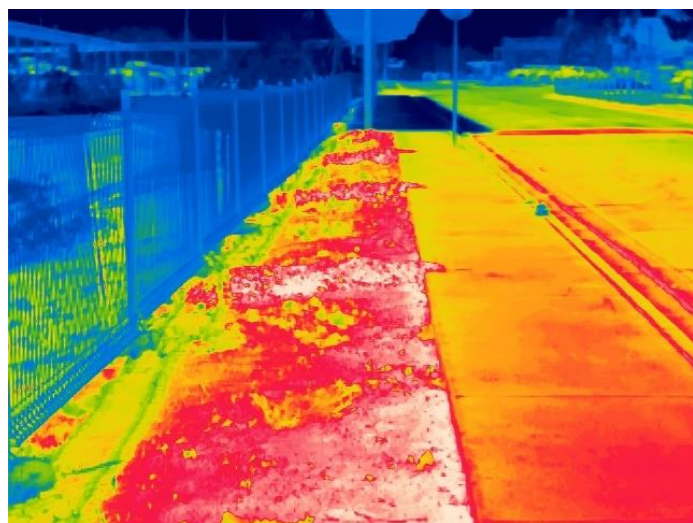
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This project was initiated by a staff-led Sustainable Healthcare Committee in September 2021 in response to the exhaustion that health-care workers were experiencing from our prolonged COVID response, staff shortages, hospital overcrowding and workplace aggression. Critical incidents and patient complaints were on the rise while staff morale was poor, especially for frontline healthcare workers. It was apparent that the Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) precinct was not providing staff, patients and visitors with access to restorative green space. This exacerbated challenges of working and receiving care in post-pandemic healthcare setting. Greening of the RDH demonstrates a grassroots response to climate adaptation and mitigation that is delivering co-benefits in a healthcare setting.

Background

- Darwin's wet/dry tropical climate increases heat stress risk for staff and patients when outdoors. This will be exacerbated by climate change impacts.
- RDH lacks shade with thermal imaging showing pathways and other paved surfaces are exposing pedestrians to surface temperatures in excess of 55°C.



Co-benefits

- This project engaged and recruited staff champions to create cool and restorative green space that improved wellbeing and delivered a climate-adapted healthcare setting. Participation was designed to increase climate literacy for mitigation and adaptation action across sectors and the community.

Benefits of biophilic design in healthcare setting

- Biophilic design connects people with nature and other living things in the built environment.
- Growing evidence of the health benefits of providing green spaces in healthcare settings.



Outcomes

- Climate-adapted healthcare settings perform better:
 - Improved staff and patient wellbeing
 - Improved outdoor thermal comfort
 - Cooler outdoor spaces encourages active mobility
 - Reduced urban heat island effect and reduced building energy demand
 - Improved local biodiversity
- Creating opportunities to improve connections with nature and people in healthcare setting
- Developing capacity to respond with direct action to the climate crisis both in healthcare and across the community.

Knowledge and values of traditional owners

- Collaboration with Larrakia Elders to select plants of Indigenous cultural significance, particularly associated with healing and traditional ceremonies.
- Improved connection to nature and country can provide a more welcoming and culturally sensitive setting for Indigenous patients who are overrepresented in NT healthcare.



Healthy Patients - Healthy Workforce - Healthy Environment

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

We're installing cool, restorative green spaces for staff, patients and visitors to promote wellbeing and adaptation to our warming tropical climate.

To lend a hand at our next working bee go to RDPH Campus Greening Volunteers on FB.

For more information on Sustainable Healthcare email: GreenHealthcare.NTHealth@nt.gov.au

To become a green champion in your work area scan here:

AN INITIATIVE OF THE SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE COMMITTEE

