

Peer-reviewed evidence on initiatives for climate-resilient health systems in Australia: preliminary findings from a rapid review

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Background

- According to the State of the Climate Report 2024, Australia's weather and climate has continued to change, with an increase in extreme heat events, longer fire seasons, more intense heavy rainfall, and sea level rise.
- These changes have significant health impacts for the Australians and without adaptive measures, the effects are expected to escalate.
- Health system's resilience is fundamental to address the grave threat of climate change on health (WHO, 2023).
- Australia's National Health and Climate Strategy exists to support the building of climate-resilient health systems.
- Contextual evidence on climate adaptation of health systems can bolster the implementation of this strategy.

Objective

This review aims to document initiatives/recommendations reported in peer-reviewed studies as effective for building climate-resilient health systems in Australia.

Methods

Google scholar was searched using relevant terms and was supplemented with an internet search.

Inclusion criteria:

- Studies conducted between 2011 and 2023 in Australia, multi-country studies including Australia.
- Studies that investigated approaches to adapt WHO's any of the six building blocks (*leadership and governance, health workforce, health information systems, essential medical products and technologies, service delivery and financing*) of the health systems to climate change (WHO, 2023).

Exclusion criteria:

- Studies that investigated the impact of climate change on health or health systems.

Findings

- Seven of the ten studies shared region-specific evidence
- None of these seven studies covered Northern Territory, Western Australia, Australian Capital Territory or Tasmania.
- Mental health was a more common area of study compared to other health problems.
- Only one study was conducted on adaptation of aged care services.
- Broadly, five of the six health systems building blocks were addressed, and health services was studied more than the other building blocks.

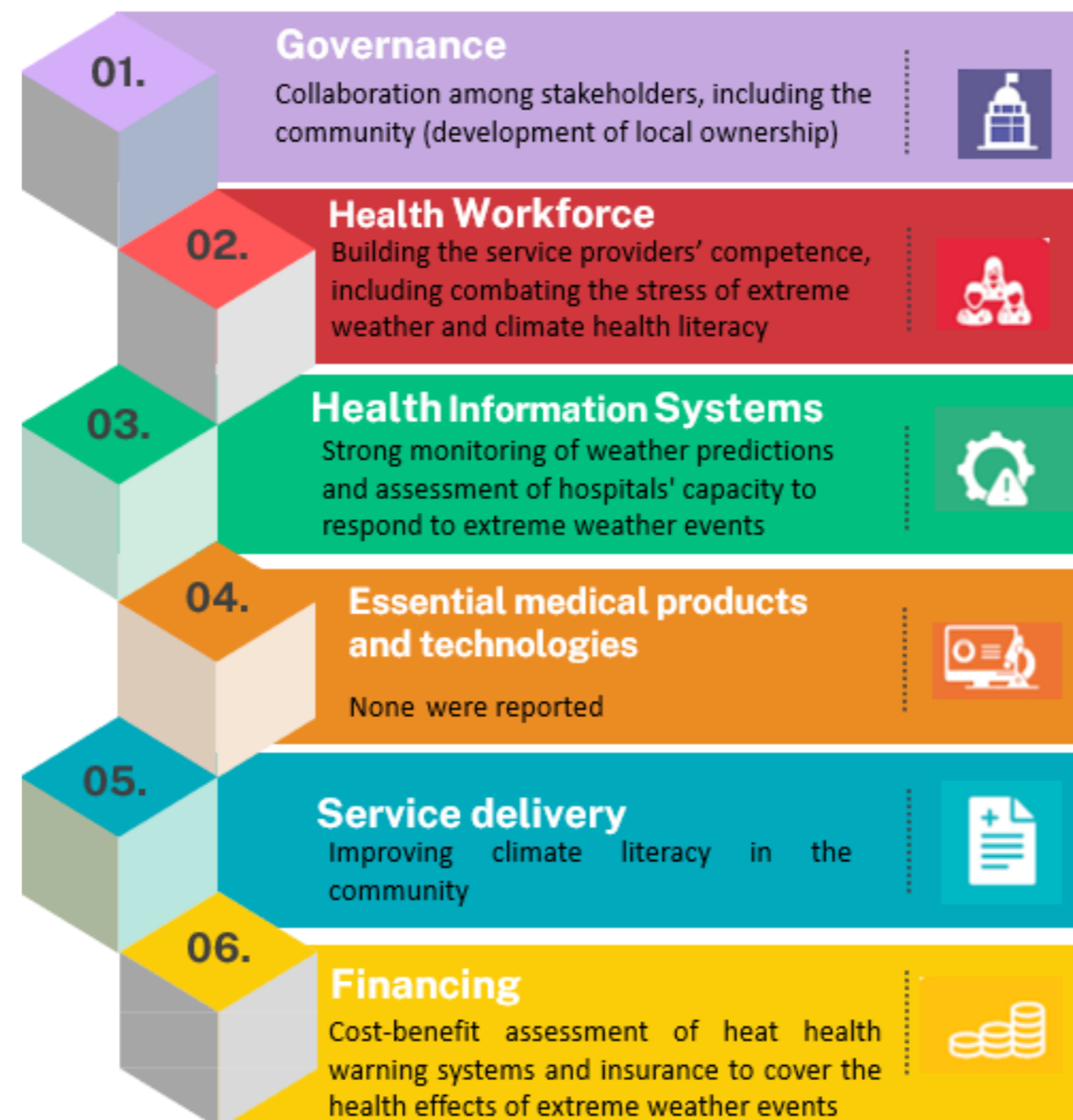


Figure 1: Initiatives/recommendations specific to the health systems building blocks

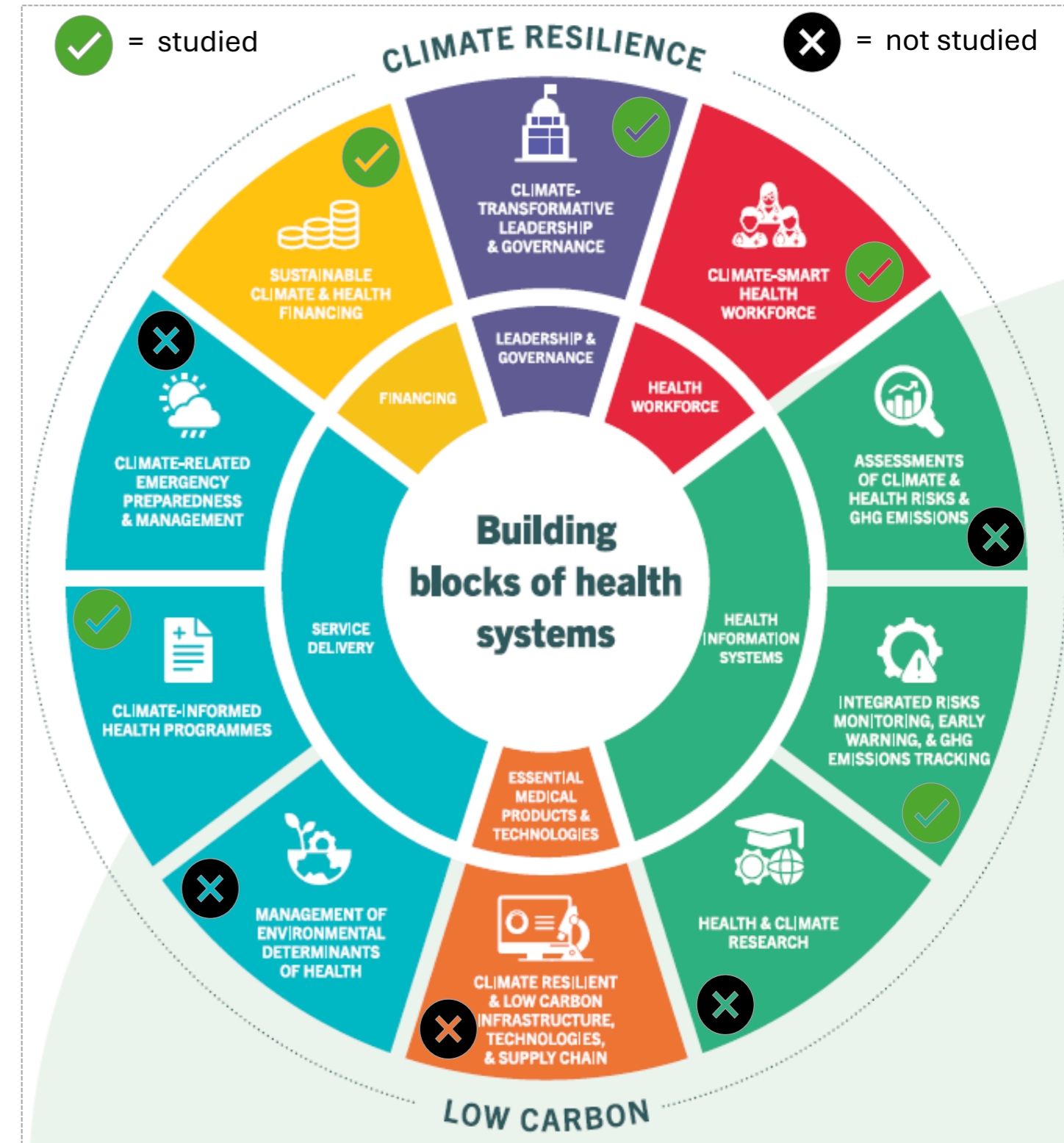


Figure 2: Building blocks of the health systems that were addressed in the studies included in this research (Adapted from the operational framework for building climate resilient and low carbon health systems)

Conclusion and recommendations

- The existing evidence, while insightful, is limited in scope and geographic coverage.
- Extending this rapid review to a systematic review could provide more extensive evidence on climate change adaptation of health.
- A national health and climate strategy-driven research approach could provide the comprehensive evidence required to chart the path forward for building climate-resilient health systems in Australia.