



**Media Release**

**New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine**

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**Sustainability core to the health of people**

Nearly a quarter of all deaths each year around the world could be prevented by healthier environments.

Humans rely on safe water and food, clean air, safe shelter and a stable climate to be healthy. If the world doesn't transition to a sustainable development pathway, the number of global deaths from environmental factors is likely to rise, says the NZ College of Public Health Medicine.

The College has developed a sustainability policy affirming that a healthy environment is a key foundation for the health and wellbeing of people.

College president elect Dr Felicity Dumble, says environmental sustainability is core to population health.

Dr Dumble says the College will take a leading role in fostering a culture of environmental sustainability.

Similarly, it will encourage other organisations throughout the health and other sectors to follow suit, she says.

"Continued damage to our ecosystem compromises our access to fundamental pre-requisites for human health and survival, like safe water, clean air, safe food and shelter."

"The central idea of sustainability – not using too much and doing more with less – not only helps to protect the environmental determinants of health, but also aligns with health sector goals to improve efficiency, and to reduce health care costs."

The health sector has a large part to play in sustainability, as its energy use, transport, waste, and use of resources significantly impact the environment.

Estimates show that about three to eight per cent (3-8%) of a developed country's greenhouse gas emissions are produced by the health sector. The World Health Organization reported in 2016 that environmental factors underpin 23 per cent of global deaths and 26 per cent of deaths among children under five annually.

It also stated that environmental factors underpin 22 per cent of the world's disease burden in terms of years of healthy life lost.

The College is encouraging its members and other organisations to challenge unsustainable practices, to push for sustainable development in New Zealand, and to champion sustainable health care.

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*For more information, contact the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine spokesperson Dr Hayley Bennett on 021 800 418.*

*For a copy of the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine's Sustainability Policy Statement, [click here](#).*