

# Climate Change and Health in New Zealand



NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE  
OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE

Climate Change Policy Statement  
New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine



Photo by Dave Allen on 21 June 2013.



# Climate Change – 2018 update-provisos

## to the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine Policy Statement on Climate Change

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) recognises climate change as both serious risk to global public health, development and equity, but also an unprecedented opportunity to improve health and health equity and reduce costs for the health sector<sup>1,2</sup>.

This update-provisos /disclaimer document updates sources for the NZCPHM's [2013 substantive policy statement on climate change](#)<sup>1</sup> and its [supplement on setting national targets](#)<sup>2</sup>. It also relates to a companion document that also updates the 2013 substantive policy statement, NZCPHM's ['Priority Actions for Climate Health 2018'](#)<sup>3</sup>.

### Background

The NZCPHM represents the medical speciality of public health medicine in New Zealand. Public health medicine is defined as the branch of medicine concerned with the epidemiological analysis of the health and health care of populations and population groups. It involves the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. Public health is focussed on achieving health equity across ethnic, socioeconomic, age and cultural groups, and promoting environments in which everyone can be healthy.<sup>4</sup>

Public health medicine specialists have a professional responsibility to act as advocates for health for everyone in society<sup>4</sup>. This means the NZCPHM advocates for and supports evidence-informed<sup>5</sup> equity-enhancing<sup>6</sup> policy on climate change for health and wellbeing that accords with Te Tiriti o Waitangi<sup>7</sup>, the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>8</sup>, and health promotion<sup>9</sup> and Health in All Policies<sup>10</sup> approaches, each grounded in the societal, economic and environmental determinants of health<sup>11</sup>. In relation to climate change, the College calls for public health medicine leadership and rapid action to address climate change at professional and personal levels – alongside health professionals, organisations, society and governments, in New Zealand and worldwide.

Health Promotion is defined as 'the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health'<sup>9</sup>, and the Te Pae Mahutonga health promotion framework<sup>12</sup> provides an actionable approach to health promotion in New Zealand (see figure below). These Priority Actions for Climate Health align with Te Pae Mahutonga in terms of its Waiora (physical environment), Toiora (healthy lifestyles) and Ngā Manukura (community leadership) components.



Figure – Te Pae Mahutonga health promotion framework<sup>12</sup>

Human health and wellbeing is linked inextricably to the health promoting characteristics and inter-dependencies of the family, work, educational, environmental and planetary ‘settings’ the community finds itself in – as depicted conceptually in Barton and Grant’s Health Map<sup>13</sup> and Raworth’s Doughnut of social and ecological/planetary boundaries<sup>14</sup> (see figure below). The College’s policies recognise that individual health and wellbeing is not created in a vacuum; instead, individuals are born with a specific genome that has been shaped by the various environments of their forebears. Individuals grow and make choices in cultures and environments that support or impair their ability to live healthy flourishing lives, within wider planetary ecological limits.

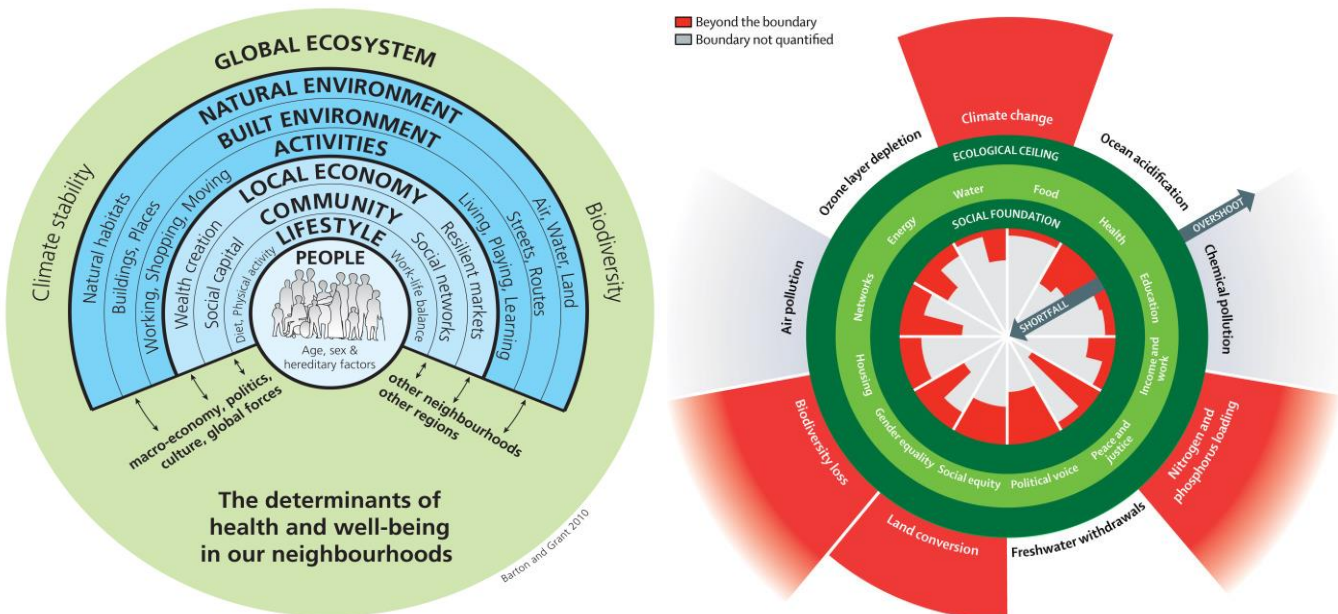


Figure – Barton and Grant’s Health Map<sup>13</sup> and Raworth’s Doughnut (social and ecological/planetary boundaries)<sup>14</sup>

A policy environment that enables individuals and communities to ‘make the healthy choice the easy choice’ must therefore achieve the fundamental human right of ‘the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ... without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition’<sup>15</sup>, living lives of dignity and opportunity whilst safeguarding the planet<sup>14</sup>.

## Provisos

The NZCPHM's substantive policy statement on climate change<sup>1,2</sup> was developed in 2013. There have been many developments since then, in particular:

- the IPCC's 2014 AR5 Working Groups 2 and 3 reports on Impacts and Mitigation<sup>16,17</sup>; the 2015 work of The Lancet Commission on Climate Change and Health<sup>18</sup> and its subsequent countdowns<sup>19</sup>; and the Royal Society of New Zealand 2017 report on human health impact of climate change for New Zealand<sup>20</sup>;
- significant advances in health and climate change since 2013, covering:
  - advances in attribution science that indicate many observed extreme weather events are highly likely caused by human-induced climate change, and better understanding of the links between these events and health outcomes;
  - more sophisticated projections of long term climate change, with greater confidence in the probabilities of temperature rises/climate changes and more precise and comprehensive projections of consequential impacts (where base predictions and trajectories have remained largely unchanged);
  - the critical importance of food supplies to sustain public health, and the fragility of the world food system under climate change;
  - harms to health equity of poorly-designed mitigation efforts<sup>21,22</sup>;
- developments in policy contexts globally and in New Zealand, including the 2015 Paris Agreement (COP21)<sup>23</sup>, with new direction and urgency to mitigation including limiting warming to 1.5°C for all gases<sup>24-31</sup>; the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>32</sup>; feasible and tangible mitigation pathways for New Zealand<sup>33-35</sup>; and New Zealand's commitment to zero net emissions by 2050 (with a Zero Carbon Act and Climate Change Commission, and the NZCPHM's submission on the Zero Carbon Bill targeting zero net all-greenhouse gas emissions by 2040)<sup>35-39</sup>;
- for the setting of emissions targets (including for Supplement One: Background to the NZCPHM's Stance on Setting National GHG Emissions Targets<sup>2</sup>), updates on recent emissions and other data for fair share models internationally, and implications for urgency and pathways for New Zealand.<sup>39-47</sup>

The [substantive 2013 policy statement](#)<sup>1</sup> and its [supplement on setting national targets](#)<sup>2</sup> should be read with these provisos/disclaimers, complemented by NZCPHM's 23 '[Priority Actions for Climate Health 2018](#)'<sup>3</sup>.

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### Acknowledgement

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