



Climate Change and Health Population Health Planning Stakeholder Consultation Outcomes



We acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia who are the Traditional Custodians of the land and water where we live, work and play. We celebrate that this is the oldest living and continuous culture in the world. We are proud to be sharing the land that we work on and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.



We welcome all cultures, nationalities and religions. Being inclusive and providing equitable healthcare is our commitment.



**Loddon Mallee
Public Health Unit**

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Produced by Bendigo Health, Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit.
October 2025

Stakeholder forum report

25 March 2025

The Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) hosted the Climate Change and Health Forum to foster collaboration and drive collective action towards a more resilient and equitable society with lasting benefits for our health, wellbeing, economy and environment.

This forum will inform the LMPHU Population Health Plan 2025-2029.

The event brought together 34 regional participants to discuss opportunities for regional and place-based action along with future collaboration opportunities.

The objectives of the forum were to:

- Gain insights into why climate change and health is a regional priority
- Hear from leading experts in the field
- Bring local expertise to the conversation
- Explore collective actions and strategies for the next four years
- Collaborate with regional stakeholders to mitigate and adapt to climate change

RESOURCE LINKS

[Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026](#)

[Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing planning](#)

[National Health and Climate Strategy](#)

[Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

HEARING FROM THE EXPERT

Vanora Mulvenna, Manager Climate and Health, Community and Public Health Division, Department of Health (DH)

presented an outline of climate change impacts on health and the DH policies that can guide statewide and local action.

Click [here](#) for the presentation.

Julianne Tice, Climate Change Policy Advisor, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS): outlined VCOSS work around climate and equity including case studies to inspire local action.

Click [here](#) for the presentation.

Some of the resource links from the presentation are replicated in this report:

[VCOSS Climate Equity](#)

[Multicultural Heat Heroes, Enliven](#)

[Climate Change and Planning in Victoria](#)

[Loddon Mallee Climate Change and Health Framework](#)



BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS

Participants discussed key system opportunities and barriers, emphasising place-based solutions and required support to sustain prevention efforts.

Key issues identified

The majority of attendees were concerned on a personal level about the increase in emergencies and disasters we will see and the type of future they are leaving for their children. People were already reporting practical changes to how they live and concerns about the climate change impacts on both mental and physical health. Key issues for their communities are summarised below:

Ensuring climate actions are **inclusive, equity-focused, and intersectional** was critical. Efforts should integrate lived experiences, address gender disparities, and engage priority populations.

Clear climate messaging and educational outreach should be tailored to different demographics to enhance accessibility and understanding.

There is seen to be a lack of **community capacity** to participate in climate resilience efforts, including energy literacy, adaptive gardening, and local mitigation strategies.

Health and wellbeing services should be supported to prioritise primary prevention, climate and health literacy, and social determinants of health to address underlying inequities and improve outcomes.

Housing, particularly in small towns, is substandard, leading to high energy costs. Assistance programs should support tenants in reducing energy use through education, financial aid, and housing improvements to enhance climate resilience.

Strengthening local food initiatives and improving **food system resilience** was crucial

to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring food security in the face of climate change.

Enhancing connections between local producers and consumers can promote sustainability.

Urban development and land use **planning** should align with sustainable climate strategies to ensure resilience in infrastructure and resource management.

Encouraging **active transport**, through advocacy efforts should focus on improving pedestrian infrastructure, public transport affordability, efficiency, and safety, especially in regional areas.

Heat-related challenges require expanding access to cool spaces and addressing energy cost burdens, particularly for vulnerable populations.

There were concerns about **resilience** and preparedness for extreme weather events, with calls to strengthen disaster response networks and adaptive infrastructure.

Strengthening flood resilience, emergency response systems, and community networks would enhance collective adaptation and recovery capabilities.

Mitigation efforts should continue to support the reduction of carbon emissions through electrification, sustainable energy transitions, and waste reduction within local organisations. Policies should facilitate the transition to renewable energy and sustainable procurement practices.

Future work opportunities

Concerns around **equity** were raised about climate impacts on priority populations. Participants called for targeted support, such as housing improvements, energy assistance, and adaptive infrastructure. Regional communities felt climate policies were not reaching them effectively, highlighting the need for more inclusive approaches.

Participants stressed the importance of strong local **collaborations** to align strategies and support place-based action which requires adequate support for community organisations, including resource sharing and capacity building on climate adaptation.

Participants emphasised the need for positive values-based **communication** to inspire action, available in different mediums to allow for different literacy levels. Providing clear direction, expert guidance, and best-practice resources can help organisations and individuals take effective action, including energy efficiency, home modifications, and food sustainability.

Participants highlighted the lack of accessible cooling spaces, particularly in smaller towns, and stressed the need for gender-inclusive design and improved public awareness.

There was support for **collective action** to drive climate-focused policies and funding. A strong localised evidence base is necessary to inform climate policies effectively.

Data collection should focus on health, well-being, and gender-related climate impacts while avoiding duplication and ensuring resource efficiency.

LMPHU support requested

Attendees' reflection on future work opportunities closely reflected their requests for LMPHU support. This makes sense as Climate Change and Health is an emerging area of focus for the region where foundational work is still required.

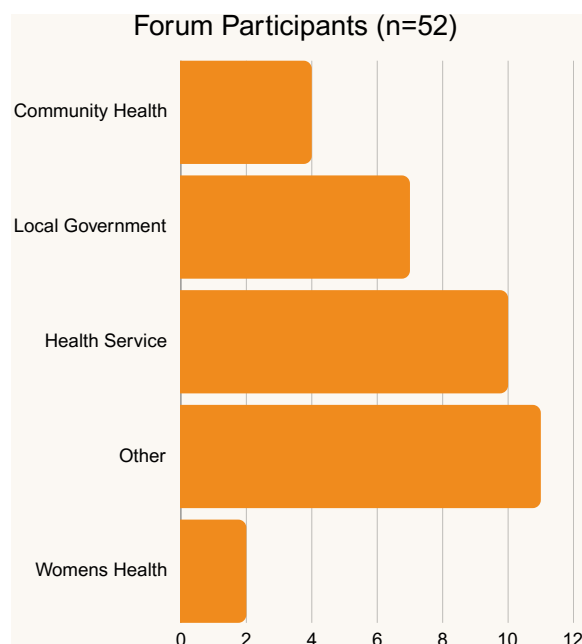
The key enabling functions that participants identified the LMPHU could provide support in were **equity, communication, capacity building, collaboration, collective action and data/evaluation**.

NEXT STEPS

The LMPHU will develop key focus areas, including goals and objectives, for the Climate Change and Health priority across the Loddon Mallee region.

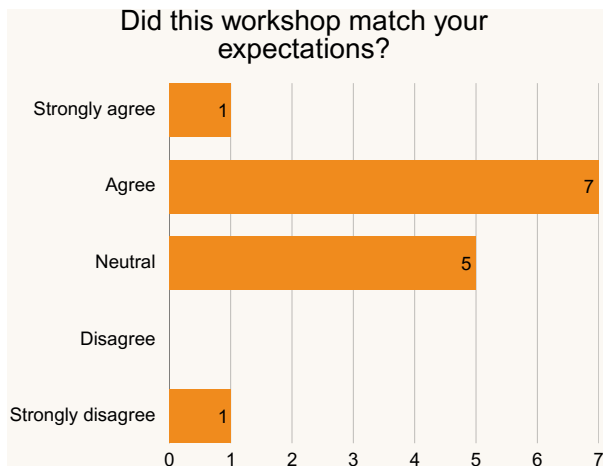
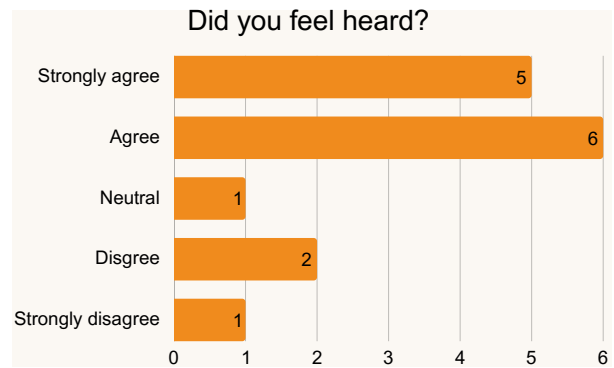
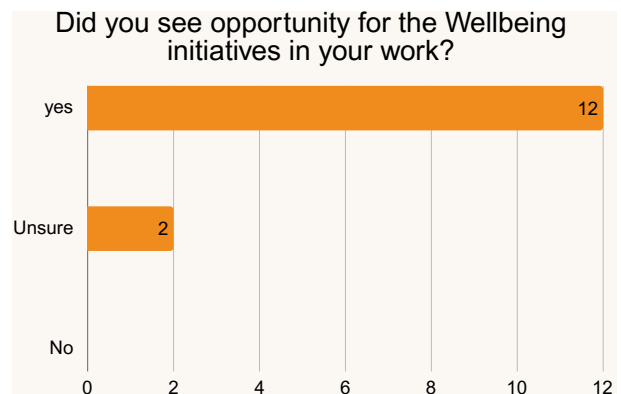
From May through July, further consultation will be conducted at the place-based level to shape sub-regional implementation and action plans.

The plan will undergo endorsement with the Bendigo Health governance, including the sub-regional Advisory Committees before its submission to the Department of Health in October 2025.



EVALUATION

A short survey was available after the consultation sessions for participants to provide feedback on the forum. Of the 21 stakeholders that remained for the break-out consultations, 14 (67%) completed the survey.



Climate Change and Health Forum

Pre-reading

Why it is a priority

Climate change is interlinked with many other social determinants of health and amplifies existing inequalities. Tackling climate change and its impact on health is a key priority in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. Climate change threatens health, wellbeing, and safety through extreme weather events like heatwaves, storms, floods, and bushfires.

Long-term effects include worsening air, water, and soil quality, shifts in disease patterns, food and water insecurity, threats to safety, economic impact and mental health challenges. These impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, exacerbating systemic disadvantage.

The Loddon Mallee region is particularly vulnerable due to its geographical, social, and economic factors. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events are expected to increase waterborne, foodborne, and vector-borne diseases, worsen chronic illnesses, and reduce food nutrition. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face unique risks but also provide leadership in climate adaptation through cultural knowledge and self-determination.

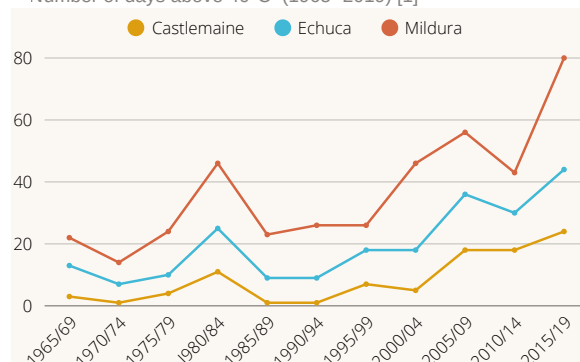
Working with our partners through a climate change informed approach, we seek to improve health and reduce inequality. Investments in renewable energy, energy-efficient housing, and sustainable food and transport can lower living costs, enhance air quality, and improve wellbeing. Other leverage points include building social capital for community resilience; creating knowledge networks; supporting organisations in climate risk assessment and mitigation.

The Loddon Mallee Climate Change and Health Framework supports cross-sector action to build climate resilience, benefiting both people and the environment.

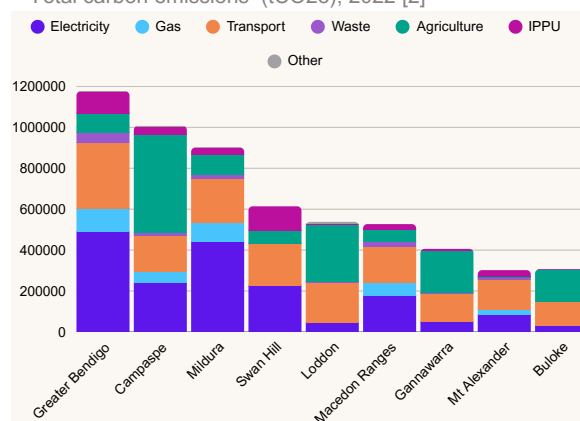
What the data told us

Heatwaves are the deadliest of extreme weather events experienced in Australia, resulting in increasing ambulance demand, hospital admissions and mortality.

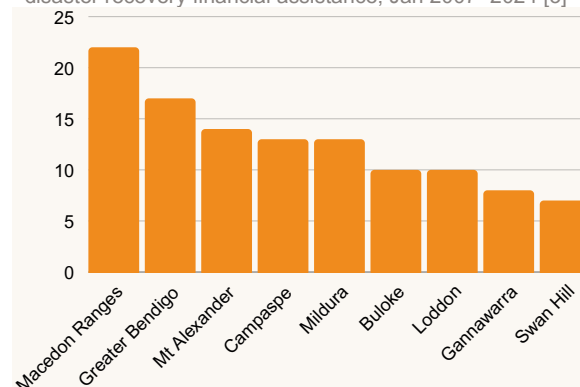
Number of days above 40°C (1965 -2019) [1]



Total carbon emissions (tCO₂e), 2022 [2]



Number of climate emergencies that required government disaster recovery financial assistance, Jan 2007 - 2024 [3]



The work so far

Build climate change resilient communities and service system across the Loddon Mallee region

1. Structures are in place to enable collective cross sector action to build climate change resilience

- The Loddon Mallee Climate Change and Health Framework was developed in collaboration with a range of local stakeholders and experts to guide this work across the region.
- The LMPHU has established governance and structures to support collective cross sector action to build climate change resilience.
- A new collective action network of thirteen regional and state-based organisations has been established (Climate and Health Leaders Loddon Mallee).
- A Climate and Health collaboration with other local Public Health Units has been formed to strengthen our collective reach.

2. Raise awareness of how climate change impacts people's health and wellbeing and the co-benefits of climate change action and health outcomes

- There have been 20 stakeholder presentations to raise awareness of the impacts of the climate change on health including local government, health services, community services audiences.
- Communication tools developed and promoted including a poster and flyer.
- Partnered with Bendigo Community Health Services to translate the Climate Change and Health flyer into Karen and Dari leading to planning for a new climate change program for new arrivals.

- Invited by Climate Change Victoria to review the Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing: guidance for local government, 2024.
- Invited to provide advice to the National Adaptation Plan after attending the workshop.
- Attended the Bendigo Sustainability Festival and engaged in community conversations on climate change and health.

3. Build climate change mitigation and adaption within health services

- Supported seven health services with activities including climate change presentations, risk assessment templates, policy and action plan development and staff survey.
- A Community of Practice has been established in the Loddon sub-region to support hospitals in their climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Supporting Bendigo Health to develop a sustainability and climate change strategy.
- Presented the Loddon Mallee Climate Change and Health Framework at the National Greening Healthcare Forum (Climate and Health Alliance).
- Upskilling within the sector is planned via a health service training module which is in development.

4. Explore cool space models suitable for implementation across the Loddon Mallee region

Cool spaces are structures to protect vulnerable populations and reduce the health risks associated with extreme heat.

- A Cool Spaces [resource](#) has been produced to support conversations and mapping within the sub-region stakeholder networks.
- The [Cool It](#) Street Program is creating cooler, healthier and greener neighbourhoods.
- The LMPHU is working to improve climate resilient homes through the promotion of the guide Home upgrades for climate resilience and workshops to improve home efficiencies. (click [here](#) for case study).
- Keeping cool in your home [flyer](#) developed and promoted.
- The LMPHU is scoping the level of interest of creating Cool Space models across the Loddon Mallee.
- Building capacity for household energy efficiency and literacy.
- In the Loddon sub-region, three more cool spaces are being developed: scoping extending opening hours and improving their accessibility and safety.

Climate Change and health [case-study](#)



5. Embed sustainability in regional and local initiatives that improve access to locally produced, fresh, healthy plant-based food

Refer to Healthy Food System [work](#).

Municipal public health and wellbeing planning 2025-2029

The Climate Change Act requires councils to have regard to climate change when preparing their municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing [planning](#) provides guidance for Councils to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of their communities through climate change action.

VicHealth has developed a module to support local government; [Supporting healthy and climate resilient communities](#).

This includes actions and case studies on:

- building active communities
- building better food systems for healthier communities
- connected and supportive communities.

Other work

- Supported the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's successful grant submission, Preparing Together Loddon Mallee: informed and inclusive disaster risk reduction action
- The LMPHU is partnering with La Trobe University to better understand priority populations perception and impact of climate change. Workshops have been held with three focus groups across the Loddon Mallee (click [here](#) for summary).
- The LMPHU now sits on the Victorian Council of Social Services' Health and Energy Nexus project working group

Sub-regional progress reports

Click on picture below for more place-based activities



Loddon sub-regional update



Mallee sub-regional update



Murray sub-regional update

Aligning our work

- National Health and Climate [Strategy](#)
- National Climate Resilience and Adaptation [Strategy](#) 2021-2025
- Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation [Action Plan](#) 2022 – 2026
- State of Sustainability [Report](#) 2024 | Sustainability Victoria
- ACOSS Heat Survey [Report](#) 22024
- Tackling the energy-health nexus, [VCOSS](#)
- Turning 'wrong way' climate 'right way' Climate Change [Strategy](#) 2023-2034, Dja Dja Wurrang
- [Resources – DJAARA \(Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation\)](#)

References/sources

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4. Standen JC, Spencer J, Lee GW, et al. Aboriginal Population and Climate Change in Australia: Implications for Health and Adaptation Planning. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022 Jun 19;19(12):7502. doi: 10.3390/ijerph19127502. Erratum in: Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022 Dec 07;19(24):16378. [45389 45389.pdf](#)
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