

HSA Environmental Sustainability (Care for Creation) Policy

May 2022

Preamble: Our relationship with the planet

1. As Christians we believe we are made in God's image and that we are given the mandate to care for creation. This mandate is based on an understanding that stewardship of God's creation (creation care) is a clear biblical imperative and is an integral part of what it means to follow Jesus as Lord¹.
2. The Triune God has an ongoing role in creation through the agency of the Spirit in continuing to create; in rehabilitating the degraded and polluted parts of creation; and in actively participating in the redemption of creation.
3. God's creation is good and waiting (Romans 8:19-23) until "all things" are reconciled in Christ (Colossians 1:20). Jesus represents the first fruits of the new creation as the Son of God who incarnated, died on a cross and rose from the dead from within creation. Jesus is the one who redeems humanity and triggers the hope of a new heaven and new earth.
4. Christians understand salvation as God's gracious initiative which:
 - Transforms human life including a restored engagement with creation care, and
 - Invites an ongoing participation in the mission of God in the world. This mission includes pilot 'new creation' activities and the rehabilitation of spoilt creation.
5. While human sin can lead to failures in our God given mandate for creation care (e.g. neglect, utilitarian misuse and greed, pollution, degradation, loss of biodiversity and human induced climate change); Christians willingly join with all people of goodwill who are committed to genuine stewardship of God's world.
6. Christians have much to learn from cultures which have preserved a creation care ethos and live close to the rhythms of the created world in a sustainable way.
7. When we enjoy the creation and our part in it, we experience a feeling of health and wholeness that we understand is essential to our wellbeing.
8. HSA seeks to partner with donors and Health Development Partners in this holistic creation care vision.

Our Commitment

HealthServe Australia (HSA) is committed to understanding the positive and negative environmental impacts of our programming and organisational activities, and conducting our activities in an environmentally sustainable way. As a health-focused non-government organisation (NGO), we are well aware that "prevention is better than cure". We therefore support the advocacy of medical professionals in Australia and globally calling for emergency action to limit global temperature increases, which are a serious threat to human and environmental health².

¹ <https://lausanne.org/networks/issues/creation-care>

² In September 2021, ahead of the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference, more than two hundred international medical journals, including the Medical Journal of Australia, published a joint editorial calling for emergency action to limit global temperature increases. The authors went as far as to say that "the greatest

In our actions and advocacy, we strive to promote positive impacts on the environment, and hence human health, and avoid, minimise, or mitigate risks and negative impacts on the environment through our programming and business practices.

Definitions

Environmental sustainability: HSA defines environmental sustainability as acting in a way that ensures future generations have the natural resources available to live an equal, if not better, way of life as current generations³. This means responsibly protecting and managing natural resources, locally and globally, to support health and well-being, both now and for future generations.

One Health:

The One Health concept is a worldwide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment⁴.

This is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes⁵.

Representative: Any person acting on behalf or under the name of HSA including Board Members, volunteers, contractors, consultants, partners and staff.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): These 17 integrated goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity⁶. The SDGs sit well within a creation care vision.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- acknowledge the importance of environmental sustainability (care for creation); outline measures to assess, understand and improve HSA's environmental performance; and to demonstrate appropriate environmental practice across all aspects of operations.
- recognise the potential impacts of organisational and office activities and seek to minimise the demands/impacts from such activities.
- introduce creation care into our health development programming.

Scope

threat to global public health is the continued failure of world leaders to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5°C and to restore nature" <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2021/215/5/call-emergency-action-limit-global-temperature-increases-restore-biodiversity>

³ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/sustainability>

⁴ <https://onehealthinitiative.com/about/>

⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/one-health>

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

While this Policy relates specifically to environmental sustainability (care for creation), it is inextricably linked to many of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and therefore to other HSA Policies. SDGs related to clean water and sanitation (6), sustainable cities and communities (11), climate action (13), life on land (15) and life below water (14) explicitly relate to environmental sustainability. However, almost all the remaining SDGs have indirect links to environmental sustainability, including: no poverty (1), zero hunger (2), good health and well-being (3), gender equality (5), affordable and clean energy (7), reduced inequalities (10), and responsible consumption and production (12).

This policy applies to all operations of HSA activities; its beneficiaries, stakeholders, and partners regardless of status or background, and without prejudice to their future participation in HSA programs.

HSA will support programs or partnerships that specifically target environmental sustainability (care for creation) as opportunities arise, as environmental health is foundational for human health.

Partnerships and Programs

Wherever possible HSA incorporates environmental sustainability (care for creation) into its programming by:

- Adopting a One Health Approach both for HealthServe Australia and our partners, in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating our programs and other activities.
- Working with partners and locals to identify any environmental impacts in the planning and operation of projects/program. This ensures early identification to allow early management of environmental risks.
- Capacity building of partners and other stakeholders in environmental management and encouraging the development of environmentally sustainable policies.
- Sharing our creation care policy with our partners and referencing it in our Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Ensuring that implementing Partners comply with local, regional and national government laws, standards, or policies related to the environment.
- Incorporating climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction into our projects/programs wherever possible.

Local Operations

Wherever possible HSA integrates environmental sustainability into its business practices through:

- Reviewing the financial institutions with which we hold accounts (e.g. banks) to ensure that these institutions have policies and practices that are environmentally sustainable and do not harm the environment.
- Minimising operational consumption (e.g. minimising printing, switching off lights and equipment when not in use, minimising waste).

- Holding meetings by phone call or online video where possible and limiting the need to travel.
- Using recyclable/compostable supplies and, as much as possible, to sourcing food and refreshment from environmentally sustainable sources at functions hosted by HSA.
- Minimising flights through using communication technologies and local capacity.
- Increasing environmental impact awareness through emails or other communications.
- Adopting the principles of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Remake.
- Providing safe and healthy working conditions for all staff.
- Considering environmental impacts when procuring goods and services.
- Work with donors and supporters to grow theological understanding, best practice creation care and personal engagement and nurture wonder.

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Drafted by Sally and Doug Shaw for HealthServe Australia Board and Member review, 17 December 2021, updated with input from Owen Lewis, and edited by Doug Shaw on 9 February 2022 with further update on 19 February with reflections from Paul Mercer (see below) as edited by Doug.

Paul Mercer’s reflections

1. I think it is true to say that God’s creation is good, but not perfect. By making such a statement, I am just thinking about how it allows us to see the world as both formed and, to some extent, still in the state of chaos. I think this is the way that we actually encounter the world.
2. I think it would also be important to say that God has an ongoing role in creation through the agency of the Spirit. This is to:
 - i. Continue to create;
 - ii. Rehabilitate the degraded and polluted parts of creation, and;
 - iii. Actively participate in the redemption of creation as part of the fall and sinful world.
3. Jesus represents the first fruits or inklings of the new creation as the son of God who incarnated, died and rose from the dead from within creation. As Christians we follow as our eternal risen Lord. Jesus is the one who redeems humanity and allows, as Paul puts it in Romans, “creation to stand on tiptoes to watch the sons of God come into glory and to bring creation with it”. It is the cruciform preserve of God in Christ which triggers the hope of a new heaven and new earth.

These are fairly deep and challenging thoughts, but I think we do skate fairly thin on our understanding of creation and can be a little nostalgic unless we do include a Christocentric perspective. It is because of this Christocentric perspective and the reality that God is creator that allows us to participate in redemptive pilots, to continue to push back against the degradation and destruction of the natural wonder and power of creation, and the importance of biodiversity. To fail to do this will see the planet continue to be more and more spoilt and degraded with the consequence for emerging health decline and challenges that lead to events such as the pandemic that we are experiencing now. Signs of kingdom recreation, nurture hope at often dark times.