

# Green Primary Care Guide

## CHECK LIST AND RESOURCES

Date:	Performed by:	Time taken:	Annual audit reference:

This guidance aims to assist General Practice in identifying areas within the clinic where they can save money and build their environmental sustainability capacity. Developing as a sustainable clinic means you have recognised the co-benefits of caring for both people and the planet.

Health professionals are on the front line in providing support and care for people from climate impacts— from heat waves and other extreme weather events; outbreaks of infectious or vector-borne diseases such as coronavirus, and dengue; mental health episodes from the effects of climate-related events; as well as treating people that are affected by cancer, respiratory, cardiovascular and other noncommunicable diseases associated with environmental pollution. This is your opportunity to help tackle climate change and its health consequences, promote actions that deliver health benefits, and reduce costs to your Clinic.

The Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP) has identified three key areas that will deliver the most sustainable: Energy, Waste and Digital processes. This guide aims to highlight sustainable actions that align with the RACGP key areas and are positioned in the checklist starting with no cost up to higher cost/impact activities.

This guide is provided to assist General Practices Clinics in beginning their sustainable journey and includes links to relevant resources to inform, evaluate and report the possible savings to the bottom line and the environment.

As with any successful change, a holistic mindset needs internal support from all staff and management to build sustainability capacity. Embedding more sustainable behaviours will require modification to existing processes either manually through work protocols or via building management systems.



## Cost to implement starts with No Cost to High-Cost options for your sustainability journey.

Sustainability Action	Cost Savings Payback \$	Environmental Benefit	Measurement	Completed (✓)
<b>1. ENERGY EFFICIENCY</b>				
<b>NO COST</b>	<p><b>Change heating and cooling settings.</b></p> <p>Recommended Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) settings for maintaining acceptable comfort conditions with reasonable energy efficiency - for winter 20–22°C and for summer 24–26°C. Consider optimal start and stop times when employees and patients arrive and leave the practice.</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>Automatically set if can or provide signage to support behavioural/process changes.</p>	<p>Making a small adjustment to temperature saves around 10 – 20% on energy costs.</p>	<p>Estimated 4 tonnes reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions annually.</p>	<p>Record energy bill information before and after installation to capture savings over a 12-month period.</p>
<b>LOW COST</b>	<p><b>Install timers or motion sensors for lighting.</b></p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>Contact a local qualified electrician for quotations.</p>	<p>Energy saving of: 20–65% in meeting rooms; 30–90% in toilets; 45–80% in storage rooms.</p>	<p>Any reduction in fossil fuel generated energy has a corresponding GHG reduction.</p>	<p>Record energy bill information before and after installation.</p>
<b>LOW – MEDIUM COST</b>	<p><b>Replace globe lighting and efficient LEDs.</b></p> <p>LEDs are more efficient and safer. Halogen downlights can heat up to 370°C which can be a fire risk and impact your air-conditioning costs.</p> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p>The Light Bulb Saver App identifies the best light bulbs to replace incandescent and halogen bulbs and can help you calculate your savings by switching light bulbs. It also provides tips about choosing the right lighting for each room in your house. Download the free app from iTunes or Google Play.</p> <p><i>Recommendations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm white globes are considered more calming and comfortable for patients and staff.</li> <li>• Paint rooms with light colours.</li> <li>• Keep windows clean.</li> <li>• Maximise natural light sources.</li> </ul>	<p>LEDs are more than 60% more efficient than fluorescent and halogen lighting, last 25 times longer, and reduce your maintenance costs.</p>	<p>Less toxic mercury in landfills and less frequent replacement. Up to 1.8 tonnes of GHG emissions are saved annually (based on the original electricity bill of \$6k).</p>	<p>Calculate the savings via the app per light replacement.</p> <p>Potential Savings are between \$7.70-\$30 per light annually.</p>
<b>LOW – MEDIUM COST</b>	<p><b>Switch to green sources of energy as a low-cost sustainable option.</b></p> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><a href="#">The Green Electricity Guide</a></p> <p>Ensure your offset to green energy projects can be verified.</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>Start with 50% renewable as first step to 100%.</p>	<p>Action this with other energy saving strategies to offset any additional costs.</p>	<p>Eliminating fossil (coal, gas) generated energy and buying energy from renewable sources improves environmental care.</p>	<p>For green power, invoices will show GHG emissions saved.</p>

Sustainability Action	Cost Savings Payback \$	Environmental Benefit	Measurement	Completed (✓)
<p><b>Clinic Equipment Audit.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>Consider replacing desktop computers with laptops. They are more efficient and offer flexibility for staff in the workplace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn off equipment each day.</li> <li>• Check the fridge has plenty of airflow to dispel heat and improve efficiency.</li> <li>• When replacing equipment (laptops, dishwashers, fridges) ensure they have an energy rating of 5 stars and above.</li> <li>• Embed energy-saving processes into work protocols via signage and reinforcement. Celebrate the savings with a team lunch out.</li> <li>• Downloads climate change and health posters and displays to start conversations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p>When upgrading your equipment, look for the energy rating label. The <b>Victorian Energy Upgrades (VEU) program</b> is a Victorian Government initiative that provides discounted energy-saving products and services to households and businesses.</p> <p><b>Energy Australia: Energy information for business.</b></p> <p><b>Energy Victoria: Energy advice for businesses.</b></p> <p><b>Sustainability Victoria: Energy saving advice for businesses.</b></p> <p><b>Business Victoria: Sustainability Information for Businesses.</b></p>	<p>Laptops use 90% less energy than desktops.</p> <p>Payback on replacing older equipment with more efficient ones is estimated to be 4 years. Older equipment uses up to 20 -30 % more energy.</p>	<p>Switching off equipment from standby saves 370 kgs of greenhouse gas annually.</p> <p>Running a more efficient fridge can save up to 300 kgs of greenhouse gas annually.</p>	<p>Record energy bill information before and after installation/ or adoption of recommendations.</p>	
<p><b>Install solar panels if possible.</b></p> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><b>Victorian Government's guide to installing solar.</b></p> <p><b>Choice guide to installing solar.</b></p> <p><b>Energy.gov.au</b> has information for business.</p>	<p>Estimated payback 5-6 years.</p> <p>Largest capital outlay and best return long-term.</p>	<p>Case studies show 13-18 tonnes of GHG reduction annually based on a 25-30 sq building.</p>	<p>Record energy bill information (kWh) and cost before and after installation.</p>	
<p><b>Install batteries.</b></p> <p>Implementing batteries increases solar benefits and provides uninterrupted power sources (UPS) in the event conventional power is lost.</p> <p><b>Victorian Government's battery installation guide.</b></p>	<p>Operational energy cost could be net zero cost.</p>	<p>Energy reliance on fossil fuel-generated emissions could become carbon neutral.</p>	<p>Combining usage information with battery capacity: Energy assessors like Ecovantage can assist with calculations.</p>	
<p><b>Replace any older heating and cooling systems.</b></p> <p>Eliminate gas and purchase high-efficiency HVAC (usually split systems) units that consume less energy, resulting in significant cost savings on your energy costs over time.</p> <p>Ensure your HVAC maintenance schedule is up to date as inefficient operation with clean filters that catch microorganisms.</p>	<p>On average, businesses that regularly maintain systems saved more than \$20,000 annually. Payback took less than 2.5 years.</p>	<p>8 tonnes of reduced GHG emissions annually over older systems.</p>	<p>Record energy bill information before and after installation or maintenance.</p>	

Sustainability Action	Cost Savings Payback \$	Environmental Benefit	Measurement	Completed (✓)
-----------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------	-------------	---------------

## 2. WASTE REDUCTION

NO COST – Supply chain reduction/ recycling/ landfill diversion

### Recommendations

The best way to eliminate waste is to minimise it where possible and manage it more sustainably when it is impossible to avoid. The waste hierarchy is a set of priorities for the efficient use of resources and waste management used in Australian policymaking. These include avoidance, resource recovery and disposal

- Provide recycling bins for paper, aluminium, and plastics – clearly label recycling and landfill.
- Provide a used battery bin.
- eWaste such as old equipment, cords etc.

### Resources

To find your closest e-waste drop-off point, use the [Recycling Near You directory](#). [EPA's guidelines for how to handle e-waste in the workplace](#).

[RACG's guide to handling waste](#).

- Arrange for your toner cartridges to be collected for refill or recycling.

### Resources

Try [Close the Loop](#) or register for workplace cartridge collections.

[Battery recyclers](#) or any [Officeworks](#).

### Recommendations

Tell pharmaceutical reps not to provide paper and more than needed samples if they are in plastic wrapping.

- Say no to junk mail and ask to be taken off mailing lists you do not require (this will save you time at the desk reviewing unnecessary emails).
- Drinking water fountains to be installed to minimise the use of plastic cups or bottled water. Signage to promote less plastic.
- If you have to use some paper in the clinic purchase 100% recycled.

### Resources

The [Australian Conservation Foundation](#) will supply you with a no junk mail sign free!

- Look for other office items that have greener alternatives such as tissues, toilet paper, kitchen paper, pens, hand wash and rubbish bin liners.

### Recommendations

- Telehealth uptake for non-essential engagement – it is good for patients who find it difficult to attend in person, it saves transport costs and can provide services to areas and communities that don't have services nearby.
- Where not required in person by the General Practice, staff could offer a telehealth call.

### Resource

[RACGP's telehealth resources](#).

Any replacement for a virgin product saves trees, fossil fuel energy and water make an impact for a better environment.

Over time and with education, signage and process improvement waste can be kept to a minimum

Reduction in waste will reduce cost.

This [calculator](#) measures your positive impact one battery at a time.

### Patient Survey:

Improved patient experience and access.

Save on transport costs and comfort for patients and emissions associated with the visit.

Sustainability Action	Cost Savings Payback \$	Environmental Benefit	Measurement	Completed (✓)
<b>NO COST</b> <b>Arrange one less pathology pick-up a day.</b>	Avoid wasted transport costs.	One less pathology pick-up saves 14 tonnes of greenhouse gas annually.	Pick up or transport cost savings.	
<b>LOW – MEDIUM COST</b> <b>Recommendations</b> Look to your supply chains to make your clinic more sustainable. Some single-use clinical items can be assessed for more sustainable or compostable replacements: aprons (greeny), green sheeting, curtains, under pads, sheets, biodegradable cups, containers, and medical trays. <b>Resources</b> Try companies that use recycled medical products, including the following: <b>Haines Medical</b> <b>Ecolab</b> <b>Medsalv</b>	Costs may be slightly higher but can be offset by energy efficiencies, so try and implement with another cost-saving measure.  Try and look for economies across your region for bulk buying opportunities to reduce unit cost prices. Contact:  Southwest Health Care.	Based on current estimates from the Department of Health 52,000 tonnes of waste is generated. About 20% is currently recycled, 12% is clinical waste, and the rest is general waste that ends in landfill.	This is an ethical measure.  Implement with other activities to offset any higher costs or seek collaboration with other healthcare operators.	

### 3. DIGITAL OPTIMISATION

<b>NO COST</b> <b>Aim to be paper-free.</b> <b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move to fully electronic records and electronic communications. Refer to the <b>RACGP's Information security in general practice guidelines</b> to ensure the protection and preservation of your practice data.</li> <li>Communicate with Doctors and patients via email where possible including test results and referrals.</li> <li>Encourage the use of eScripts only (process or policy modification) <b>eprescribing</b>.</li> <li>If you must print, set the printer to both sides (setting change).</li> <li>Emails contain a reminder not to print.</li> </ul> <b>Resources</b> <b>National Medicines Symposium   Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.</b>  <b>Green email signature environmental footer examples (wisestamp.com).</b>  Find RACGP climate change and health posters <b>here</b> .	One ream saved of paper cost: \$5-6.  Achievable savings are usually 50% less paper use	Environmental: One ream equals 20kgs of greenhouse gas saved.  Replacing virgin products saves trees, water, energy, and landfill and usually cost less.	Count how many reams you use each quarter, then measure the reduction as recommendations are introduced. Calculate the dollars per ream saved.	
--	---	---	--	--

#### Next Steps Notes: