



Healthy People in a Healthy Environment Executive Summary

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This Key Directions Statement seeks to inspire and facilitate a whole-of-community approach to developing and implementing policy and action that achieve positive human and environmental health outcomes across Australia.

This document summarises the major insights and recommendations that arose out of the Australian Committee for IUCN's, 'Healthy People in a Healthy Environment' symposium, held in Brisbane in September 2019.

These key directions are intended to guide decision makers and practitioners in the environmental, conservation, health and urban planning sectors who are interested in, or developing, health-nature policy and practice.

Our health is inextricably linked with the health of our environment and with our social and cultural connections to it, something that has been long recognised by First Australians. The next few years are a rare and critical opportunity for the world to change course and to lead the transformative change needed to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis as well as to ensure that the health-culture-nature connection is forefront and centre of all future goals, frameworks and policies.

1. Key Direction: Adopt an integrated, cross-sector approach to designing and implementing evidence-based policies, programmes and research

We need to adopt a *One Health* approach to the health-nature challenge to achieve meaningful, sustainable impacts in public and environmental health in Australia.

This includes:

- Developing an evidence-based, cohesive national health-nature policy framework to align and coordinate policy and practice across jurisdictions and sectors. This framework needs to recognise both climate change impacts as well as generations of traditional knowledge.
- Creating interdisciplinary research, knowledge and capacity building collaborations that build and communicate evidence to inform health-nature policy and programs.
- Partnering across sectors to grow on-ground, inspiring scalable programs that are evidence-based and recognise the benefits of natural places for both broader public health including First Australians and disadvantaged communities.
- Establishing new models of sustainable, investment partnerships that fully recognise the broader environmental, social (including community health and wellbeing) and economic benefits of nature-based programs while providing biodiversity benefits.
- Raising the profile of nature-based solutions – actions that address societal challenges, whilst also providing human health and biodiversity benefits – and incorporate them into all relevant regional and national policies.

CASE STUDY

Healthy Parks Healthy People

Initially created by Parks Victoria in 2000, Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP) has grown from a successful marketing tagline into a global movement. HPHP recognises the importance of contact with nature as essential for human emotional, physical and spiritual health and well-being, and reinforces the crucial role that parks and protected areas play in nurturing healthy ecosystems. The initiative has become established not only in Australia, but has spread to places as diverse as Europe, the United States, Korea, Finland, Canada, Colombia and New Zealand. While different countries and states are at different stages of implementation, a common HPHP approach is being developed. It reinforces the need for stronger partnerships between the environment, health and community sectors in creating integrated policies, communications, research and on-ground program partnerships.

2. Key Direction: Ensure equitable access to nature for all

A significant number of Australians, particularly those from low income and disadvantaged communities, do not enjoy equal access to nature.

Recognising the strong and growing evidence that access to natural places is associated with improved health and wellbeing, we need to:

- Enshrine access to nature as a basic human right into national and state legislation and policy.
- Reduce the barriers that prevent our diverse communities from accessing nature so that all Australians can get their daily *nature dose* - in our homes, our schools, across our cities and in our protected areas.
- Create healthy, liveable, green cities by building the natural fabric of our towns and cities.
- Remind people that 'nature is everywhere' and that each of us is a part of nature rather than separate to it.
- Create innovative opportunities for people to connect with nature.

3. Key Direction: Opportunities for nature-based experiences and learning should be readily available to all Australians

With the majority of Australians living in our cities, there is an urgent need to reconnect our urban populations to nature, which many people have become physically and emotionally detached from, through:

- Education programs that are designed to foster environmental commitment and action, through nature-based learning from early childhood through to secondary and higher education and public programs.
- Citizen science and volunteerism.
- Nature-based health and wellbeing programs and on-ground partnerships with health service providers (e.g. park prescriptions).

4. Key Direction: Traditional knowledge and understanding of the relationship between healthy country and healthy people should be shared and embedded in learning, policy and practice

First Australians have walked our country, cared for our landscapes and thrived in balance with nature

“Care for country is absolutely a fundamental cultural determinant of health and wellbeing - our ability to go out and about, to maintain connections to country, independent of where we live is really profound. It gives us a sense of belonging, a sense of spirituality and of connection with it.”

Professor Kerry Arabena, Managing Director
Karabena Consulting

for more than 60,000 years. The intimate relationship between healthy country and healthy people can only be nurtured if First Australians are involved in creating and embedding traditional knowledge in lifelong learning, policy and practice through:

- Approaching science and conservation with First Australians based on respect, sharing knowledge, listening and learning.
- Respecting the need and rights of First Australians to own, manage and get onto country.
- Facilitating the sharing of First Australians and community success stories.

5. Key Direction: Raise awareness of the value of nature for human health and wellbeing

We need to inspire a critical mass of Australians to become passionate nature protectors. People's relationship to and understanding of nature can be mediated and communicated to inspire and enable a sense of wonder, and so one's identity includes the natural world.

Awareness of the value of nature can be enhanced through:

- Using storytelling as a powerful tool for engaging other sectors and broader society.
- Employing value-based messaging to build

engagement and motivate real behaviour change and action.

- Improving nature's 'marketing campaign' to build a constituency of support beyond the conservation sector.
- Using innovative communication tools, channels and partnerships to spread the message.
- Identifying ambassadors and cross-sector champions that can help to spread the message and drive action and new investment in improving public and environmental health.

6. Key Direction: Co-design and align socio-cultural and ecological outcomes and measures across health and environment sectors

We must aim to drive effective national conversations that ensure productivity is achieved in balance with nature. Australia needs a system that measures and

values the diverse benefits that thriving ecosystems provide as well as demonstrating the impact of development decisions.

This includes:

- Adopting a *Theory of Change* rationale to planning, implementation and reporting.
- Improving methods for quantifying and demonstrating nature's benefits, including the costs of not acting, to all sectors and broader society.
- Developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) goals and measures that can be applied across sectors.
- Providing guides to harmonise objectives and outcomes across health and environment.
- Communicating the shared indicators for healthy environment, healthy people in terms of wellbeing, health, social, cultural and ecological outcomes.



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CASE STUDY

Budjiti Traditional Owners and Bush Heritage healthy country partnership

Naree and Yantabulla Stations in western New South Wales are the traditional lands of the Budjiti people. The stations are managed through a partnership with conservation organisation Bush Heritage and Budjiti Traditional Owners. Through cultural camps, Budjiti Elder Phil Eulo shares his knowledge with the younger generations and Bush Heritage staff to ensure better care for, and a deeper connection with, country. This is done by Phil bringing to life the cultural stories of the landscape and teaching about the places where his ancestors lived and the resources they used. Embedding of cultural knowledge and science into property management plans and working together to look after country has improved the health of country and all the people involved.

The partnership and right-way science approach for Phil means, "having access to my country, to continue my mother's role and work as I promised here in looking after our country. Where I can teach the young ones as they are the future. Giving them strong connections with country and culture and not just Budjiti kids but kids from all walks of life to build better understanding."