



Kia ora Friend --

There has been an enormous amount of climate work over the past month, both here and internationally. The recent climate flooding in the North Island was a real spur to the crowds who attended the School Strike 4 Climate early in the month. OraTaiao extended our Medical Certificate for Climate Health to both the strikers and their supporters- climate action is health action.

OraTaiao is also delighted to welcome our latest organisational member, the NZ Hospital Pharmacy Association. A significant proportion of the climate emissions from healthcare is embedded within the medications we use and prescribe, and the NZHPA will strengthen our voice as we look to make climate sustainability a key decision-making factor in medication procurement in Aotearoa.

We are moving inexorably towards the general election later this year, and a number of the current government's recent decisions have a strong scent of electioneering around them. Many of these are deeply disappointing from a climate perspective and roll back the already unambitious efforts that they have made. This year, more than ever, the election will be a climate election.

As daylight savings ends and we move into later autumn and winter, it is the perfect time to restart our online climate kōrero series. Look out for details of these coming later in the month with everyone welcome to attend

Ngā mihi nui

Dermot and Summer,
Co-convenors, OraTaiao: NZ Climate & Health Council

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1. Update on OraTaiao activities

Welcome to new members

As the terrible impacts of climate change on health become apparent around Te Ika a Māui in 2023, health professionals are rising to the challenge. We welcome the newcomers who've taken the step of joining OraTaiao. Our strong growth means we're on track to reach the milestone of 1,000 members in the next couple of months.

We are especially excited to announce our nineteenth organisational member. The New Zealand Hospital Pharmacy Association Te Kāhui Whakarite Rongoā Hōhipera o Aotearoa is a not-for-profit voluntary member organisation which represents the views of and advocates for hospital pharmacy staff. At their last Annual Conference, OraTaiao Co-convenor Summer Wright (Ngāti Maniapoto) co-presented on "Climate Change as a Health Equity Issue" along with India Logan-Riley (Ngāti Kahungunu). Her message was that health workers need to collectivise and get politically active – and now the Association has decided to join OraTaiao. Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou!

From the local to the global

No opportunity to advocate for a healthy climate is too small, or too large for OraTaiao. In February and March, we addressed local Councillors, independent reviewers and ministry officials and expert panelists at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

In Ōtautahi Christchurch, a number of Councillors are trying to stop work on a key cycleway. The "Wings to Wheels – Papanui ki Waiwhetū" cycling route in the Northwestern suburbs is one of 11 projects to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport being funded by Central Government's Climate Emergency Response Fund. In a letter to The Press, OraTaiao Co-convenor Dr Dermot Coffey urges the Council to complete this cycleway and another one in the East, for better public health. Meanwhile in Pōneke Wellington, OraTaiao representative Tess Luff spoke up in support of street changes in [Thorndon](#) and in [the Eastern suburbs](#) that will make it safer and easier to use low-carbon transport options – whether you're walking, riding a bike or scooter, or catching the bus.

The Future of Local Government all across the motu is currently the subject of an independent review. Picking up on a point in the [review report](#), OraTaiao strongly endorsed the statement that, "Fundamentally, we consider at the core of a future for local government is a stronger focus on wellbeing." Led by OraTaiao representative Dr James Hamill, we made a series of recommendations to help mitigate climate change and improve peoples' health in our submission. We also wrote to Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport with comments on their Indicative Strategic Priorities for the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport in 2024.

And in the culmination of a year's work involving OraTaiao and our partners in the Children's Rights Alliance, Summer Wright tuned in to the meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. The Committee was considering evidence from Government and civil society organisations, including a thematic report on "[Children's Rights in a Changing Climate](#)" submitted by OraTaiao. In their "[Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of New Zealand](#)", the UN acknowledged our evidence by calling on the New Zealand Government to involve children and young people, in particular Māori and Pasifika children and those living in low-income settings, in climate change planning and decision-making.

- "[Healthy roads](#)" – Letter to The Press
- "[Benefitting health & climate – Submission on proposed Wellington street changes](#)"
- "[A stronger focus on wellbeing – Feedback on the draft report: Review into the future for local government](#)"
- "[Feedback on Indicative Strategic Priorities for the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport in 2024](#)"
- "[Government must involve young people in climate change decisions, UN says](#)" – OraTaiao media release



Image: Wellington City Council

A Climate Health Action Plan for Te Whatu Ora

by Liz Springford & Silvia Purdie

Executive Board members, OraTaiao: NZ Climate & Health Council

We represented OraTaiao this month at Te Whatu Ora's lively Climate Health Action Plan workshop consultation, run by Vicktoria Blake as project lead for the Climate Change working group. It was great to participate in a broad-based discussion including diverse key groups sitting around the table together with an open agenda.

Te Whatu Ora's mandate is Actions 3.28 & 9.5 of the Government's 2022 National Adaptation Plan [here](#) and summary [here](#) - supporting Objective C4, "The health sector is prepared and can support vulnerable communities affected by climate change."

Cyclone-related postponement till 13 March underlined the plan's value, with much workshop discussion based on very recent experience, as well as COVID-19 and quake learnings. Discussion highlighted the 'chronic fatigue' of the health workforce and infrastructure and explored opportunities for positive steps towards identifying and meeting health risks in a warmer world. Themes for us included interdependence, Tiriti, priority populations focus, wide health definition (especially our psychological and social well-being) and the wider determinants of health. We noted our [OraTaiao publication](#) which said, inter alia, that immediate health harms of climate events are the tip of the iceberg as all-causes morbidity and mortality rise in the subsequent months. Climate changes destabilise our global markets and global security, as well as our natural environment.

A top priority for us is risk reduction – harnessing the health sector's capacity to rapidly reduce emissions, so addressing mitigation alongside adaptation. Limiting global warming to within humanly adaptable 1.5 degrees, co-governance, fairer sharing of resources within Aotearoa (including health), decentralised services, a healthy health workforce, community and online health support, and infrastructure resilience, all determine how effective the Climate Health Action Plan can be.

We look forward to more involvement after the valuable workshop discussions are synthesised. Huge thanks to every OraTaiao member for all you do to create a more hopeful healthier future together!

Call for abstracts – Climate Health & Sustainable Healthcare Conference

The Climate Health and Sustainable Healthcare in Aotearoa Conference 2023 committee, comprising representatives of [Climate Health Aotearoa](#), [Sustainable Healthcare Aotearoa](#), the [Climate and Health Alliance](#) and OraTaiao, is now calling for abstracts for their biennial conference. Experts, researchers, up-and-coming climate health leaders, sustainability professionals, health professionals, policymakers, and students are invited to submit abstracts for presentation (in person or virtually) in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington on 5-6 July 2023. They particularly welcome tangata whenua perspectives, as well as other indigenous voices. Suggested topics, abstract guidelines and the submission portal are available [here](#).

2. National happenings

Cyclone Gabrielle showed that climate change can kill

With the immediate clean-up all but complete, attention is now turning to what Cyclone Gabrielle and other recent portents of climate breakdown mean for health.

Writing in The Spinoff, Isabella Lenihan-Ikin and OraTaiao member Kaeden Watts cover not only the well-known tragedies of the 15 lives lost, but less well-publicised and longer term health impacts. They offer key learnings we can take away about the impact of climate change on our health.

The effects however were felt unevenly. Māori, whose dispossession from land created the foundation of New Zealand's bloated agricultural emissions, were also disproportionately impacted by the resulting climate breakdown. An online wānanga hosted by Tina Ngata (Ngāti Porou) discusses the impacts of the cyclones and climate change on whānau, hapū and iwi – including critical health impacts like access to dialysis for communities cut off by road closures. In what she calls “the age of climate consequence”, the wānanga tackles topics like environmental racism, decolonisation and decentralisation. It concludes with what can we draw from tikanga in surviving the climate catastrophes.

Rural communities are another group who felt disproportionate health impacts. Rural GP and OraTaiao member Dr Robin Barraclough gives a heartfelt personal account of what the climate emergency means for health in NZ Doctor Rata Aotearoa, concluding with a “wish list” of seven specific health-focused actions.

Finally, OraTaiao Executive Board member Silvia Purdie talked with a clinical psychologist and a journalist at the Global Climate Strike this month, on how action to mitigate the climate crisis can also help improve mental health. The result ended up on The Spinoff.

- The Spinoff: [“Cyclone Gabrielle showed us that climate change is a health emergency, too”](#)
- Mahi a Atua: [“Wānanga in response to the effects of Cyclone Gabrielle on whānau, hapū and iwi”](#)
- NZ Doctor: [“We are burning up and drowning: Plan, act, do: Health’s job in the climate change emergency”](#)
- The Spinoff: [“Good climate policy is good mental health policy too”](#)



Tāmaki

Makaurau Climate Strike. Photo: Silvia Purdie

Make it a climate change election

You might think that Cyclone Gabrielle would have focused the minds of all our political leaders on mitigating and adapting to climate change. But sadly, heading towards the general election in October this is not the case. And it's not just the odd climate denialist MP, like [National's Maureen Pugh](#), going cold on the causes of warming. In the name of a return to "bread and butter" issues, Prime Minister Chris Hipkins has ditched a host of Government projects and policies to tackle climate change – leading Green Party Agriculture Spokesperson Teanau Tuiono to [quip](#), "Good luck trying to make bread and butter when the climate's cooked."

Outside the beltway, however, voters are increasingly focused on the climate. The day after the Prime Minister scrapped \$586 million worth of climate spending, a 1News Kantar Public poll found that 54% of New Zealanders want the Government to act with more urgency on climate change. The previous month, the Ipsos Issues Monitor [survey](#) found that 27% of respondents ranked climate change among their top three concerns. "Climate change has risen significantly in prominence as an issue", said the pollsters, "with more New Zealanders identifying it as a key concern since tracking began in February 2018. As a result, it has re-entered the country's top-5 issues for the first time since July 2019."

Heading towards October, OraTaiao will be relating to people's concerns and will work to make it a climate change election in 2023. We will be asking political parties about their policies on climate change and interactions with health and equity. Their responses and information on the parties' websites will be rated by a group of health professionals and used by OraTaiao to produce a scorecard to guide voters in September. And regardless of who holds the ministerial warrants after 14 October, we will brief the incoming Minister of Climate Change.

- RNZ: [“Climate policies burn on the bread and butter bonfire”](#)
- 1News: [“2023 will be a climate election – Greens”](#)
- Newshub: [“Government can address both climate and cost of living issues, ministers say as Greens take aim over torched policies”](#)
- 1News: [“Exclusive poll: After cyclone, do voters want urgency on climate change?”](#)
- The Spinoff: [“A ‘climate change election’ in 2023? Here’s what the polling tells us”](#)

Climate Strike fuels hope

Another group who are working to make it a climate change election are the young people who rose up across the motu in this month's Global Climate Strike. OraTaiao was proud to join [School Strike 4 Climate NZ](#) and [Fridays For Future Aotearoa](#) at their rallies on 3 March and to support [their demands](#) – we'll be supporting their next Climate Strike on 26 May, too.

We also supported [the demands](#) raised independently on 3 March by the young Pacific Climate Warriors on the Global Climate Strike in Te Whanganui a Tara, including their call for the New Zealand Government to stand with Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Honolulu and endorse the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#).

- OraTaiao: [“Medical certificates for all Aotearoa to join this Friday’s Global Climate Strike”](#)



SS4C

Wellington. Photo: Grant Brookes

3. International news

New six-nation alliance for a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific

Meeting in Port Vila two weeks after the Global Climate Strike, the governments of Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, and the Solomon Islands agreed to create a “Fossil Fuel Free Pacific” and called for all countries worldwide to end the expansion of fossil fuel production and manage a global, equitable and unqualified phase-out of coal, oil and gas. At the close of the meeting on 17 March, a formal outcome resolution was passed. Called the “Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific”, it appeals to regional governments and countries worldwide to:

- Adopt a Pacific Island Forum Leaders Declaration for a just transition to a “Fossil Fuel Free Pacific” as soon as possible
- Spearhead the global phase out of coal, oil and gas
- Join the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance
- Support the adoption of the Pacific’s UN General Assembly Resolution seeking an advisory opinion on climate change from the International Court of Justice
- Avoid terminology such as “unabated” or “inefficient” that creates loopholes for fossil fuel producers and polluters
- Call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Oxfam Aotearoa is now spearheading a campaign for Climate Change Minister James Shaw to Stand with Pacific Leaders and commit to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific. Having [signed the call](#) for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty last year, OraTaiao is joining the Oxfam Aotearoa campaign and encourages our members to do the same.

- Oxfam Aotearoa: “[Stand with Pacific Leaders and commit to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific](#)” – sign the petition [here](#)

IPCC Synthesis Report a ‘clarion call’

Despite regional advances in the Pacific, the global picture painted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is less optimistic. UN secretary general António Guterres said that the [IPCC Synthesis Report](#) released this month was, “A clarion call to massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every timeframe. Our world needs climate action on all fronts: everything, everywhere, all at once.”

Initial responses from the health sector have pointed to well-known co-benefits both for ecosystems and for human health by integrating adaptation and mitigation. An editorial in the British Medical Journal quotes Dr Christopher Trisos, one of the report’s authors: “For example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are often co-emitted with other near surface air pollutants, can have huge benefits for improving human health. And shifts to sustainable healthy diets can also improve biodiversity by opening up land for ecosystem restoration. The greatest gains in wellbeing could come from prioritising climate risk reduction for low income and marginalised communities, including people living in informal settlements.”

In a series of short videos produced by Global Climate and Health Alliance, OraTaiao's international parent body, Canadian Public Health researcher Dr Sherilee Harper said, "For the first time in IPCC history, the Summary For Policymakers explicitly identifies colonialism as something that increases climate change risks and also prevents adaptation. This means that to effectively protect and promote health, we need to address and dismantle colonialism."

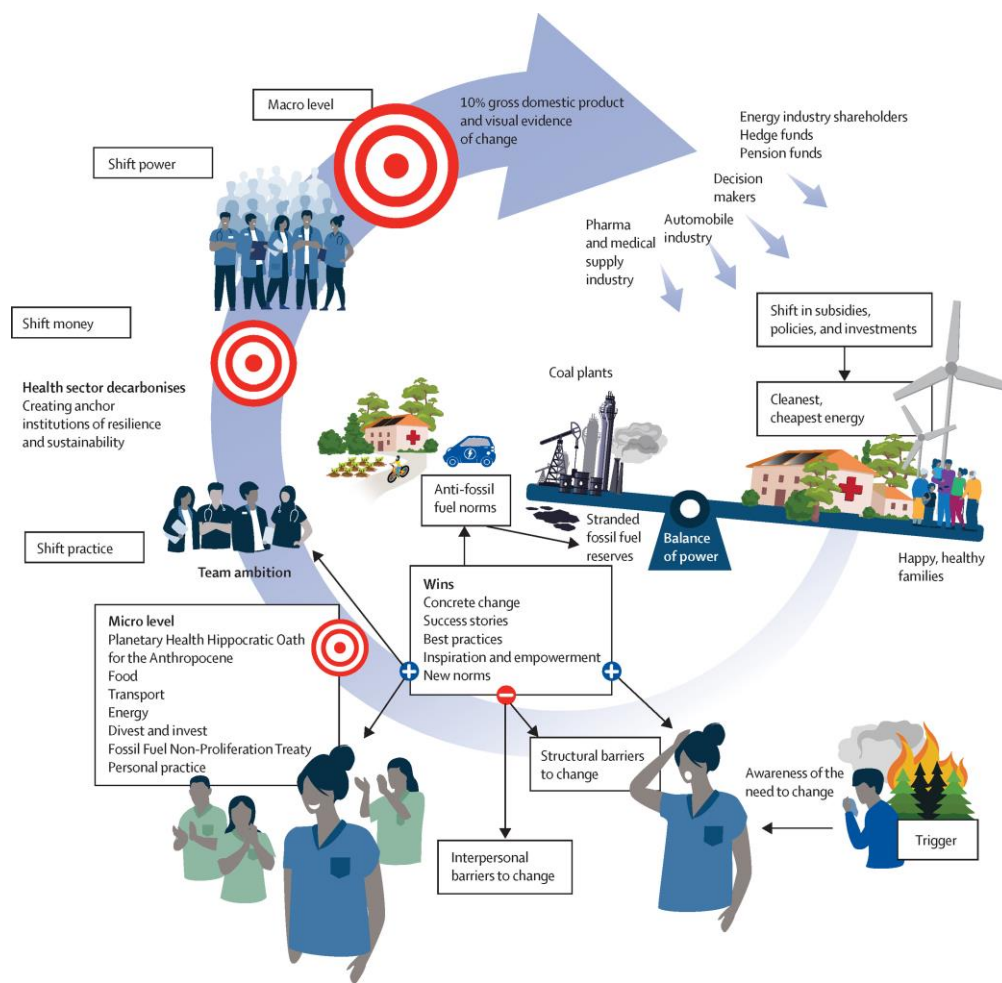
- BMJ: "[Climate change: Window to act is closing rapidly, warn scientists](#)"
- GCHA: "[Impacts of climate change on health: what do the experts say?](#)"

Lancet Planetary Health: 'social tipping interventions by the health community'

While the IPCC Synthesis Report warns of climate "tipping points" as warming exceeds 1.5°C, like changes in ocean circulation or rate of ice melt which would activate feedback loops and further accelerate warming, a team of health professionals have come up with a framework to activate "socioeconomic tipping points" – actions to accelerate so-called contagious spread of new behaviours, social norms, and structural reorganisations to drive down net carbon emissions.

Writing in the March 2023 issue of The Lancet Planetary Health, the multidisciplinary, gender-balanced group of experts from six continents point out that, "Health framing of the climate emergency has been shown to motivate populations to action." Their evidence-based framework offers practical approaches to action at the micro, meso and macro levels of society. "As trusted voices within communities around the world", they say, "health professionals and health organisations have the potential to influence the social and policy landscape in support of decarbonisation." Their article helpfully includes downloadable PowerPoint slides to facilitate our work.

- The Lancet: "[Learning to treat the climate emergency together: social tipping interventions by the health community](#)"



Lancet

Image: The

4. Good news, interesting links, books

Against the run of play, a win!

“The nature of networked efforts is that progress is the result of the work of many people. Attribution of wins to any one group or action is difficult. That said, it is important to celebrate progress and to acknowledge contributions, as these provide inspiration.”

This is one of the messages in the Lancet Planetary Health article on “social tipping interventions by the health community”, immediately above. In this spirit, we are pleased to share the news that a submission to Parliament last October by OraTaiao and others has been successful. Despite the Prime Minister’s “climate policy bonfire”, our recommendations were accepted by Environment Minister David Parker and included in amendments to legislation now before the House. Once passed, bicycles, scooters, e-bikes and ride-share services provided by employers to get staff to and from work will be exempt from Fringe Benefit Tax and incentivised, in the same way as company cars.

- OraTaiao: [“Exempt work-supplied bikes from Fringe Benefit Tax – Submission to Parliament’s Finance and Expenditure Committee”](#)

- Parliamentary Counsel Office: “[Supplementary Order Paper No 322](#)”

Healthy hospital going green

A new boiler system has cut Christchurch Hospital's carbon emissions by more than 50%, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha says. The system began operating last month and supplies hot water heating and steam sterilisation to the hospital. It uses woody biomass, such as wood chips and forestry slash, replacing an older diesel-fired boiler.

OraTaiao has long [campaigned for the phase-out](#) of fossil-fuelled hospital boilers as an achievable way to improve health while also reducing emissions. Commenting on the new hospital boiler, Canterbury public health physician Dr Anna Stevenson said, “Air pollution in Canterbury, Christchurch particularly, has been a really big problem and has caused lots and lots of people to need care from primary care, general practitioners and admissions to hospital. For us to be contributing to [the poor air quality] was not a great look but we have fixed that now.”

- RNZ: “[Christchurch Hospital slashes carbon emissions by more than 50%](#)”

The silver lining in the rain clouds

The first draft advice to the Government from the Climate Change Commission back in 2021 estimated that electricity generation in Aotearoa would be 95% renewable sometime between 2030 and 2035. That target was almost reached last year. In the final quarter of 2022, hydro dams, geothermal plants, wind and solar farms provided 94.7% of all power – the highest share since records began in 1974 – due to a very wet spring over Te Ika a Māui filling hydro storage reservoirs. To supply Huntly’s coal-burning units, just 36,000 tonnes of coal were imported in the three months to December – 94% less than the amount arriving 18 months earlier. The share of renewables is expected to stay high for at least another quarter.

- Stuff: “[Electricity is the cleanest it's been since records began](#)”

Except where credited above, this newsletter was written by Grant Brookes.

OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate and Health Council
<http://www.orataiao.org.nz/>

OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate and Health Council comprises health professionals in Aotearoa/New Zealand calling for urgent and fair climate action - with real health gains now and for our future.