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Human health

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1. Understand the fundamental role of the natural environment as the basis for sustained population health.
2. Continue systematic assessment of present and future health risks from environmental changes.
3. Highlight climate change impacts on Australia's health as a key rationale for supporting emissions abatement.
4. Sustain rural health and wellbeing in the face of regional drying, drought, depleted soil fertility and biodiversity loss.
5. Consider particular health risks in Indigenous communities from climate change and environmental degradation.
6. Reshape Australia's food systems and nutrition policy, to reduce environmental damage and the rise of diet-related chronic diseases.
7. Create sustainable cities via an understanding of how the built environment fundamentally affects consumer choices, human behaviour, relationships and health.
8. Revitalise the public debate on Australia's population size, growth rate and resultant environmental pressures – and its relation to health risks.
9. Foster a proactive inter-sectoral engagement of the health sector in a society's responses to these environmental–ecological threats.
10. Update 'ecologically sustainable development' to highlight population well-being and health as a central criterion of sustainability.

Introduction

The primary challenge in protecting and sustaining the health of communities or populations lies in reducing the adverse environmental and social circumstances that underlie or mediate risks to health. In the 21st century, the world population faces a historically unfamiliar tier of threats to human safety and health arising from human-induced depletion and disruption of environmental and ecological systems. The primary prevention task is, in principle, obvious enough: to minimise or halt the deleterious environmental processes. Many of those processes and their consequences are evident in Australia.

Some of these environmental–ecological changes are of an integrated **global** kind, such as climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification and the intensification of the global cycling of activated-nitrogen. For those, abatement will generally reduce health