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250–290 Spring Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002 Australia  
Telephone +61 3 9249 1200  
[www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)  
ABN 29 004 167 766

The Hon. Mark Butler MP  
Minister for Health & Aged Care  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Via email: [minister.butler@health.gov.au](mailto:minister.butler@health.gov.au)

Dear Minister Butler

**Re: National climate and health strategy**

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) applauds the Government's decision to develop Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy and also the establishment of a National Health Sustainability and Climate Unit.

Environmental sustainability is one of RACS' key advocacy priorities, as we recently highlighted in our [pre-budget submission](#). As a College we have previously joined with other medical colleges to call for an ambitious national plan to cut Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, aligned to science-based targets.

The effects of climate change are already impacting on the health of individuals across the world. Counter-intuitively, the health sector itself represents a significant source of pollution and is a major contributor to national carbon emissions world-wide.

In Australia it is estimated that health care contributes to seven per cent of the entire country's carbon emissions, with around half of this contribution coming from hospitals alone. Due to being one of the most resource-intensive areas of the hospital, strategies which target the operating theatre have the potential to have the highest impact within the health-care industry.

RACS has a dedicated Environmental Sustainability in Surgical Practice Working Party (ESSPP) which leads the College's advocacy efforts in this area. Our members work closely with researchers and other medical professionals both nationally and internationally to explore evidence-based approaches to sustainability and we are well placed to advise Governments on appropriate targets and strategies. As an example, our international engagement includes collaborations with researchers from United Kingdom, a country where the National Health Service has taken a lead role – its ambitions and plans are [freely available](#).

RACS is committed to working with Governments at all levels to ensure that the strategy initiatives which reduce the impact that surgical practice has on the environment, while also ensuring patient safety or quality of care is not compromised. We note that the Government [recently held a roundtable](#) and has begun engaging in formal consultations on the national strategy. Where appropriate, RACS would welcome the opportunity to be involved in any future stakeholder engagement processes, and to share our views on a number of key areas such as targets, accountability, investment priorities, and strategies to reduce low-value care.



We look forward to your response and would be happy to discuss the contents of this letter in greater detail.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sally Langley  
**President**  
**Royal Australasian College of Surgeons**

Emeritus Professor David Fletcher FRACS  
**Chair**  
**RACS Environmental Sustainability in Surgical  
Practice Working Party**

Prof Mark Frydenberg FRACS  
**Chair**  
**Health Policy & Advocacy Committee**

**cc** The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care