

WAMSS Green Guide Draft 1

Preamble

In 2015, the WAMSS Foundation has developed this Green Guide in response to the growing need for WAMSS to formally recognise its considerable prior environmental action, and develop a framework for WAMSS to solidify, further develop and maintain this dedication to environmental sustainability into the future.

In presenting this specific Green Guide, the WAMSS Foundation recognises the importance of developing guidelines and frameworks that support and encourage WAMSS' activities, rather than those which may prove unnecessarily difficult, expensive, or unwieldy.

As such, this Green Guide contains clear and concise recommendations that are evidence-based wherever possible. We believe these all to be achievable for WAMSS Executives and Committees in the short-term, and sustainable for the future.

We have reviewed a range of existing how-to guides, reports, policies from across Australia and internationally (including existing WAMSS and AMSA documents) to find strong, evidence-based and practical ways for WAMSS to reduce its carbon footprint, improve its environmental credentials and become more sustainable.

WAMSS has been a leader in this area for several years now. In 2011, it developed the first Code Green campaign in Australia. From WAMSS' campaign the national AMSA Code Green project was developed - with both WAMSS' and AMSA's projects going from strength to strength in recent years.

Finally, these efforts can ensure that WAMSS continues to grow its relationships with other medical student societies and external organisations.

It is intended that this Green Guide be reviewed regularly by the Code Green Officer each year, and at two-yearly intervals by the WAMSS Foundation.

The history of WAMSS' environmental sustainability efforts

In 2011, AMSA Global Health put the call out for medical schools and their global health groups (GHGs) to take local action on climate change. WAMSS, through its GHG, Interhealth, heard this call loud and clear, and from this came **WAMSS Code Green**. WAMSS understood the need to take the lead on issues of public health importance - by education, advocacy and direct action.

In the 21st century, one of these issues is Climate Change and Health. Code Green was developed with the Mission:

“To act within our sphere of influence to: educate and raise awareness about the impact of
climate change on health; encourage medical students and health professionals to act to
minimise their own environmental impact; and to advocate for the implementation of adaptive and
mitigating climate change strategies at a local and national level”.

Even prior to this, WAMSS developed its *Climate Change and Health* policy in 2010, and in the same year, AMSA adopted its *Climate Change and Health Policy*. WAMSS Code Green was a natural progression from this. In September 2011, Interhealth and the inaugural Code Green co-coordinators, Katherine O'Shea and Erica Parker, submitted a Communique, with a proposal to “include *Climate Change and Health* within the UWA Medical Curriculum”, through a range of specific curricular inclusions. In recent years, some of these have indeed been included, and now form part of the UWA MBBS and MD curricula.

Over the past few years, AMSA has developed its own Code Green project, overseen by a National Project Coordinator under the AMSA Global Health umbrella. WAMSS has a Code Green Officer, which sits on both the WAMSS Committee and the Interhealth Committee, providing an important link between these committees.

This year, the WAMSS Foundation has taken these previous steps, and attempted to unify these into a Green Guide. (environmental sustainability plan for WAMSS).

Recommendation across WAMSS (incl. within Code Green Officer role)

The Foundation proposes two key changes that will significantly reduce the environmental impact of WAMSS, and be sustainable to integrate into the basic operations of the Society. The goal is to implement these changes in such a way as that they 'become second-nature' for a forward-thinking society such as WAMSS.

The first change proposed is to **carbon offset all events**. We believe that this will not negatively affect the day-to-day running of WAMSS, nor the planning and running of its events. The carbon footprint of the event will be calculated by an appropriate Carbon Offset calculator, and be converted to a dollar amount. This amount can then simply be added to event budgets. The Treasurer will take this part of the budget for payment to a nominated carbon offsetting company. Refer to Appendix ? for Carbon Offsetting details.

The second proposed change is to ensure **recycling bins are present at all events**. This is a simple and achievable change that can significantly reduce the environmental impact of both small and large-scale student events. This is also a visible example of WAMSS' dedication to sustainability. We would encourage WAMSS event coordinators to seek venues with available recycling bins. However in the case where a venue did not have this, WAMSS would make recycling bins available for use. This would be in conjunction with the Guild (in particular the Guild Environment Council), to facilitate this.

Other recommendations are:

- to continue with divestment of WAMSS' bank accounts, term deposits and other financial instruments;
- to provide environmentally friendly gifts for guest speakers (eg. WAMSS KeepCups, Fair Trade/carbon neutral tea/chocolate);
- to reduce the use of disposable cups, plates and napkins at events and meetings, and to source such products from environmentally sustainable (carbon neutral, recyclable, biodegradable etc.) brands where possible;
- to use Fair Trade, environmentally sustainable and local sources of food and supplies as much as possible.

These recommendations follow on from the first two proposed changes (carbon offsetting and recycling bins); as once these initial changes are implemented, WAMSS can more easily and directly address these other recommendations.

It will be the Code Green Officer's role to support the WAMSS committee (with the help of the WAMSS Executive) to implement our proposed changes by fielding questions, giving direction and encouragement.

They will also be required to research, assess and select a carbon offsetting calculator (or oversee the development of a WAMSS-specific calculator), and carbon offsetting means for all of WAMSS carbon-offsetting for the year. It is important that both of these elements are re-evaluated regularly by the WAMSS Committee to maintain efficacy and maximum benefit.

It would also be beneficial for the Code Green Officer to research and suggest sources of environmentally friendly cutlery, food and supplies for events and the day-to-day running of WAMSS. This research will be guided and supported by handover documents and this Green Guide.

The Code Green Officer should continue and build on previous contact with other WAMSS positions, including the WAMSS Interhealth Chairs, the WAMSS AMSA Representative(s) and the WAMSS Executive. In addition, the Code Green Officer should continue to foster and develop relationships with external groups such as Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) on environmental sustainability issues. These relationships will serve as good avenues to advocate for improvements both at a national level and at other universities.