



Sustainable Event Guide



This guide has been developed by the Green Nephrology Action Team (GNAT), a working group of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN), and endorsed by ANZSN, the Renal Society of Australasia (RSA), Kidney Health Australia (KHA and Kidney Health New Zealand (KHNZ).

Acknowledgement

Parts of it have been adapted from the United Nations Environment Programme Sustainable Events Guide (2012). This is available at:

http://www.ecoprocura.eu/fileadmin/editor_files/Sustainable_Events_Guide_May_30_2012_FI_NAL.pdf

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A sustainable event is one designed, organised and implemented in a way that minimises potential negative impacts and leaves a beneficial legacy for the host community and all involved.

United Nations Environment Programme Sustainable Events Guide, 2012

1 Introduction

The Australia New Zealand Society of Nephrology recognises that urgent action is needed within the nephrology community to help minimise the impacts of climate change, sustainably manage natural resources, and reduce and manage waste. It is committed to embedding environmental sustainability into its operations.



Meetings and academic conferences are important for learning, skill development, knowledge sharing and networking. However, they also typically involve substantial travel and high consumption of resources (e.g. materials, energy, water) and generate large amounts of waste. While many of these impacts are felt locally in the vicinity of the meeting, they can also be far reaching due to the influence of meeting-induced greenhouse gas emissions on climate change.

This guide has been prepared by Green Nephrology Action Team (GNAT), a working group of the ANZSN, convened in partnership with Renal Society of Australasia and Kidney Health Australia. Its purpose is to help nephrology meeting organisers maximise the positive impacts of conferences while minimising the negative ones. It provides practical information and recommendations on how to manage nephrology conferences more sustainably.

Benefits of a sustainable event

- **Costs savings** – these can result from the implementation of energy efficiency measures, waste reduction and consumption of local products.
- **Positive reputation** – demonstrating a commitment to sustainability principles can improve image and competitiveness.
- **Awareness raising** – among participants, staff, service providers in the local community; this can have the flow on effect of encouraging people to make responsible decisions.
- **Social benefits** – the provision of work and jobs can benefit regional suppliers and the local economy, while preserving resources and minimising emissions benefits all people and societies.
- **Influencing decision making** – engaging stakeholders, sharing standards and introducing new ways of behaviour can inspire change and act as a catalyst to encourage environmental best practice across the region.

2. Sustainability checklist



This checklist summarises the range of initiatives that can be undertaken in the process of working towards a sustainable conference or event. Depending on your experience and resources, try to undertake as many initiatives as possible.

If you succeed with an initiative, mark down a score of 1 next to the initiative. You can then tally your score for each section, and your final total. Once completed, the checklist will provide an easy means of assessing achievements and identifying areas where improvements can be made. The aim should be to increase your score with each subsequent conference or event.

More detail about each of these initiatives can be found in the subsequent pages of this report.

Event planning	Score	Notes
Have you developed a sustainability action plan?	/1	
Have you identified a core “sustainability team” or responsible person?	/1	
Have you communicated your commitment, sustainability plans & expectations to participants & other stakeholders (e.g. sponsors, suppliers)?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/3</i>	
Venue		
Have you chosen a venue with a green policy, action plan & established reporting procedures?	/1	
Have you preferentially considered venues that have been awarded a Green Star Rating or other green building certification?	/1	
Have you considered venue accessibility by walking or public transport?	/1	
Have you preferentially considered venues able to facilitate video-conferencing at reasonable cost?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/4</i>	
Conference materials		
Paper		
Have you minimised printed materials by using electronic communication wherever possible (e.g. websites, email, SMS etc.)?	/1	

Have you avoided printing programs, delegate handbooks and abstract booklets, instead providing information online, via email or on a memory stick?	/1	
Have you ensured event communication includes a green message asking people to think before printing?	/1	
If printing is unavoidable, have you printed double sided on recycled content paper & included a request to recycle after use?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/4</i>	
Gadgets		
Have you taken steps to minimise promotional material, delegate bags & other gifts?	/1	
If these are felt necessary, have you preferentially included products produced from sustainable materials, obtained from a local supplier, with a useful purpose?	/1	
Have you investigated environmentally-friendly options for name badges & lanyards to reduce plastic usage?	/1	
Have you asked delegates to bring their own pens & writing material?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/4</i>	
Re use		
Have you considered potential to use conference materials from previous events (e.g. advertising stands or banners)?	/1	
Have you produced reusable printed signage, avoiding including dates & times to assist with longevity?	/1	
Have you asked delegates to return their name badges at the end of the meeting for re-use at future events?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/3</i>	
Exhibitors		
Have you encouraged exhibitors to use reusable structures & to make exhibition stands that are made as sustainably as possible?	/1	
Have you asked them to avoid energy intense stands & unnecessary lighting?	/1	
Have you requested they minimise waste generation & ideally remove & dispose all discarded publications & materials at their own cost?	/1	
Have you ensured your expectations & all of the above information has been provided to them in their exhibitor pack &/or conducted an exhibitor briefing to provide further information?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/4</i>	
Food		
Caterers		
Have you preferentially considered caterers who follow sustainable guidelines for sourcing food?	/1	
Have you asked caterers about policies for responsible food procurement, recycling & disposal?	/1	

Have you enquired about use of local, seasonal & organic products?	/1	
Have you reduced the amount of meat served or considered a wholly vegetarian menu?	/1	
Have you requested use of Fairtrade products where possible?	/1	
Have you planned to communicate to the caterer the final number of participants a few days prior to the event to minimise waste?	/1	
Have you investigated the possibility of redistributing leftover food to others?	/1	
Have you enquired whether the caterer, venue or other nearby facility has the ability to compost food waste?	/1	
Have you clearly highlighted vegetarian food offerings, any use of Fairtrade products & recycling & food waste systems in place to educate & encourage attendee involvement?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/9</i>	
Disposable items		
Have you avoided single use items such as plastic plates & cutlery & paper serviettes (use crockery, glassware, metal cutlery & linen instead)?	/1	
Where this is not possible, have you opted for disposable items made from sustainable materials (e.g. plant-based plates, cups made from a high percentage of recycled plastic) that are compostable, biodegradable or recyclable at end of life?	/1	
Have you provided water stations with jugs of water or bulk dispensers & glasses?	/1	
Have you provided speakers with water in jugs with glasses?	/1	
Have you encouraged participants to bring reusable water bottles & reusable coffee cups?	/1	
Have you requested that providers offer discounts on coffee purchases when reusable cups are used?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/8</i>	
Transport		
Have you preferentially chosen a meeting destination that is central to the majority of participants?	/1	
Have you preferentially chosen a destination serviced by direct flights?	/1	
Have you provided participants with maps, timetables & other useful information to facilitate travel on foot, by bike or public transport?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	<i>/3</i>	
Waste		

Have you established which waste streams can be managed at the chosen venue (e.g. general waste, mixed recycling, paper & cardboard, organic waste)?	/1	
Have you ensured each bin area has a clearly labelled receptacle for each type of waste?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	/2	
Carbon Accounting & Offsetting		
Have you attempted to estimate the carbon footprint of your event?	/1	
Have you considered offsetting carbon emissions?	/1	
Have you offered delegates the opportunity to contribute to offsetting the event, e.g. by purchasing 'green tickets'?	/1	
Have you encouraged participants to offset their travel greenhouse gas emissions?	/1	
Have you considered initiatives that might increase the likelihood that they will do this (e.g. by integrating a calculator in the online and/or offset payment into the registration process, recommending an offset provider)?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	/5	
Monitoring & Reporting		
Have you monitored and recorded progress on achieving sustainability (starting with this checklist!)?	/1	
Have you reported back to delegates and stakeholders (including about overall, progress, successes and plans for improvement at subsequent events)?	/1	
<i>Section subtotal</i>	/3	
TOTAL SCORE	/52	

3. Planning for a sustainable conference

The process of organising a successful conference starts well before the actual event takes place. Similarly, if sustainability principles are to be effectively incorporated into a meeting, planning for this must begin early.

Steps to consider:

- **Prepare an action plan:** This should have clear measurable objectives, responsibilities, deadlines and appropriate monitoring actions.
- **Build a core “sustainability team”:** This group should oversee the sustainability side of the meeting and implement the action plan. Alternatively, if human resources are limited, make one person on the organising team responsible for this.
- **Take a step-by-step approach:** Start gradually, focusing on one or two aspects. It is preferable to begin where tangible and measurable results are quickly seen (e.g., reducing the use of materials or recycling waste). Goals can then be expanded at the next event.
- **Focus on the areas where it is possible to have in influence:** If external parties are responsible for the selection of the venue or the service providers, it is still possible for the sustainability team or person to offer recommendations.
- **Communicate sustainability plans:** If sustainability has been introduced into the meeting planning, promote this. Use available communication channels to ensure participants and other stakeholders (e.g. sponsors, suppliers) are aware and engaged in sustainable activities from early on.
- **Establish means of monitoring and reporting:** Ensure a plan is in place for measuring and/or documenting achievements and failures. These can be used as a base from which to set targets for the future. Report back to conference attendees and stakeholder groups.

The aim should be to start gradually, monitor and learn from progress and failures and improve over time.



4. Implementing a sustainable conference

4.1 Venue

Key points to consider:

Location and accessibility: The venue should be easily reachable by walking or public transport. It should also have a place to store bicycles.

Building: Preferentially consider venues that have been awarded a Green Star Rating* or other green building certification. If a certified building is not available, request to see the building's sustainability policy and a list of relevant initiatives. Give preference to those that implement energy efficiency measures and/or use renewable energy sources, apply water conservation practices, use water-efficient appliances and have advanced systems in place for waste collection and recycling.

Virtual meetings: Preferentially consider venues that are able to facilitate video-conferencing at reasonable cost. Simultaneously considering energy efficiency measures and use renewable energy sources is important because electronic communication can be energy-intensive.

*Green Star is an internationally-recognised rating system that assesses the sustainable design, construction and operation of buildings. In Australia, Green Star assessments are performed by Green Building Council Australia and 4-stars indicates "best practice", 5-stars indicates Australian excellence and 6-stars indicates international excellence.



Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre – an example of a sustainable building

MCEC was the first centre in the world to be awarded a 6-Star Green Star environmental rating by the Green Building Council of Australia for its innovative environmental design and operational features.

Some of MCEC's sustainable design features

- maximum natural light with an 18-metre tall glass façade
- energy efficient lighting
- solar hot water
- radiant slab heating and cooling
- use of low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) to enhance indoor air quality
- use of sustainable building materials.

Green initiatives available for events held at MCEC:

- waste separation bins and composting facilities
- event waste restrictions
- sustainable catering based on seasonal produce from local producers and suppliers
- green power with renewable energy sources
- e-water cleaning and sanitising systems
- digital signage to minimise paper signs
- SecondBite food donations for surplus event food.

<http://mcec.com.au/plan-an-event/why-choose-mcec/>

4.2 Conference Materials

Key points to consider:

Paper use: Minimise the amount of printed and sent material by using email for pre and post meeting communication with participants. Both the conference program and abstract booklets should be available in electronic format only. If printing is necessary, recycled or FSC accredited paper should be used, documents should be printed double-sided and the text and number of pages should be reduced as far as possible. Encourage participants not to print the electronic material sent unless strictly necessary. If they must print, ask them to follow sustainable printing recommendations.

Gadgets: Minimise promotional material, delegate bags and other gifts. If these are felt necessary, consider whether products have been produced from sustainable materials and have a useful purpose. Also consider purchasing products from local suppliers to minimise carbon miles and support local industries.

Re-use: Some conference material from previous events can be re-used with the same or a different purpose (e.g. stands that are used year after year; old banners that are turned into delegate bags). Ask delegates to return their name badges at the end of the meeting for re-use at future meetings.



Exhibitors: Encourage exhibitors to minimise the amount of promotional material at their stands; use material that is produced as sustainably as possible; use reusable structures and exhibition stands; avoid energy intense stands and unnecessary lighting; minimise waste generation and ideally remove and dispose all discarded publications and materials at their own cost or pay for the ones left at the venue. It is important to ensure that exhibitors (and all other stakeholders) are engaged in the sustainability process and appropriately briefed on what is expected of them. This can be achieved via personal conversations, including all important sustainability information in their exhibitor pack &/or conducting an exhibitor briefing to provide further information.

4.3 Food and catering

Key points to consider:

Caterers – Preferentially consider caterers who follow sustainable guidelines for sourcing food. Specifically enquire about use of local, seasonal and organic products – these have a lower environmental impact due to shorter transport routes and lack of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Given that meat is more resource-intensive to produce than vegetable-based foods, consider reducing the amount of meat served or providing a wholly vegetarian menu.

Fairtrade – Tea, coffee, sugar, chocolate and a whole range of other products are available with Fairtrade certification. Commit to providing Fairtrade products where possible and promote this to delegates.

Food waste – Communicate to the caterer the final number of participants a few days prior to the event to help avoid waste. Investigate the possibility of redistributing leftover food to others – there are a number of organisations in Australia that can facilitate this (OzHarvest is one – see <http://www.ozharvest.org>; Second Bite is another – see <https://www.secondbite.org/about/>). Enquire whether the caterer, venue or other nearby facility has the ability to compost food waste.

Disposable items – Avoid single use items such as plastic plates and cutlery and paper serviettes. Instead use crockery, glassware, metal cutlery and linen. Where this is not possible, opt for disposable items that are made from sustainable materials (e.g. plant-based plates, cups made from a high percentage of recycled plastic) and are compostable, biodegradable or recyclable at end of life. Avoid providing or selling bottled water. Instead provide water stations with jugs of water or bulk dispensers and glasses. Speakers should also be given water in jugs with glasses. Participants should be encouraged to bring reusable water bottles to carry with them into meeting rooms. They should also be encouraged to bring their own reusable coffee cups. Offering discounts on coffee purchases when reusable cups are used is a good way to encourage sustainable behaviour. Consider selling branded Keep Cups and water bottles.



Did you know....

- Livestock farming is responsible for ~20% of all green-house gas emissions from human-related activities
- A typical meat eater's diet requires up to 2.5 x the amount of land compared to a vegetarian diet and 5 times that of a vegan diet
- Estimates of the water required to produce a kg of beef vary from 13,000 – 100,000 litres. The water required to produce a kilo of wheat is between 1,000–2,000 litres.

<https://www.vegsoc.org/environment>



Did you know....

- It takes 3–7 litres of water and 1 litre of oil to produce 1 litre of bottled water
- Plastic water bottles take >1000 years to biodegrade & if incinerated, they produce toxic fumes
- >60% of plastic bottles end up in landfill in Australia
- It takes 8 years to recoup the cost of a bottle of water by refilling the bottle with tap water

coolaustralia.org

4.4 Transport

Key points to consider:

Meeting location: Given that long distance travel is by far the greatest source of event related emissions, the geographical area where an event takes place greatly influences its environmental impact. Consider a destination that is central to the majority of participants (online tools exist to assist with these e.g <https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/Pages/Tools.aspx>). Maximise the option of direct flights because the main impact of flying occurs during take off and landing.

Venue location: The meeting venue should ideally be easily reached by public transport from the airport and the main train station as well as close to, or well connected with, accommodation options and the city centre.

Provision of transport related-information: Promote and encourage sustainable transport. Participants should be provided with maps, timetables and other useful information in order to move around in a sustainable way on foot, by bike or public transport.

Compensating travel emissions: Participants should be encouraged to offset their travel greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. See section 4 (Carbon neutrality and offsets) for more information on this.



4.5 Waste

Many specific considerations on waste can be found in other sections of this guide.

Additional key points to consider:

Bins: Establish which waste streams can be managed at the chosen venue (e.g. general waste, mixed recycling, paper and cardboard, organic waste). It is important that enough bins are provided for the waste and recycling that is expected at the meeting. Each bin area should have a clearly labelled receptacle for each type of waste.

Zero-waste: Over time, as ambition grows, consider working towards a zero-waste conference. Holding a zero-waste conference involves careful planning as all products and materials used must be reusable, recyclable or compostable. Standard waste bins must be removed and only recycling and compost bins available.

“Zero Waste is a goal that is both pragmatic and visionary, to guide people to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are resources for others to use. Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to reduce the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water, or air that may be a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health.”

– Definition of Zero Waste as adopted by the [Zero Waste International Alliance](#)



5. Carbon neutrality and offsetting

Climate change and its implications are increasingly moving people and organisations to make voluntary commitments and take actions to reduce GHG emissions and even go beyond to achieve carbon neutrality.

A meeting or event can be considered carbon neutral when its net GHG emissions are equal to zero. To become carbon neutral

- 1) emissions must be calculated
- 2) emissions should be reduced as much as possible
- 3) carbon offsets* (or carbon credits) equivalent to the remaining emissions must be purchased.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Climate Neutrality (net zero GHG emissions)} \\ = \\ \text{Baseline GHG Emissions} - \text{GHG Reductions} - \text{Carbon} \\ \text{Offsets} \end{array}$$

*A carbon offset is generated from an activity that prevents, reduces or removes GHG emissions from being released into the atmosphere to compensate for emissions occurring elsewhere. Carbon offsetting is based on the fact that the impacts of GHGs are not local, but global. Hence GHG reduction measures taken in different parts of the world will have similar climatic benefits. To avoid genuine criticisms of “green washing”, offsetting should be done only after all possible measures to reduce GHG emissions have been implemented. A detailed explanation of how to estimate GHG emissions and guidelines on purchasing carbon offsets can be found in the United Nations Environment Program Sustainable Events Guide, 2012.¹

Involving participants

If you are planning on offsetting your conference or event, participants can be offered the opportunity to contribute by purchasing a ‘green ticket’. Alternatively, participants can be encouraged to offset their own travel GHGs emissions. Strategies that can increase the likelihood of this include:

- 1) integrating a calculator in the online registration process that, on the basis of the travel-related information entered by the user, automatically generates the estimated amount of emissions related to their travel
- 2) the use of a common offset provider recommended by the event organisers
- 3) adding the offset amount to the registration fee with the organisers then purchasing the offsets and providing adequate proof of offsetting.

Ideally, personal offsets should be reported back to the conference organiser so that these can be taken into account when calculating the GHG emissions of the meeting. This avoids ‘double accounting’ whereby travel emissions are considered +/- offset twice.

Involving participants can be a very powerful awareness-raising tool, since it shows them the amount of emissions their own trip to the event has generated and thereby makes the issue of GHG emissions personal.

¹ United Nations Environment Program Sustainable Events Guide 2012. Available at http://www.ecoprocura.eu/fileadmin/editor_files/Sustainable_Events_Guide_May_30_2012_FINAL.pdf (accessed 13 Feb, 2018)

6. Monitoring and Reporting

Wherever practicable, sustainability efforts and GHG reductions should be monitored and quantified. The checklist provided at the beginning of this report is an easy monitoring starting point. The number of items ticked off can be used to show what has been achieved, while the un-ticked items can become goals for the next event.

As experience with sustainable events improves, consider working towards a more detailed collection of quantitative data including

- Resources consumed
- Waste generated and disposed
- Energy consumption
- Travel
- Water consumption
- Stakeholders' engagement and attitude
- Percentage of local suppliers

Ensure that results are reported back to conference attendees and stakeholder groups so that successes can be jointly celebrated, learnings shared and awareness raised.



Sustainable Meeting Guide Action Plan Template

The template below can be used to develop your own action plan (the text serves as example of how you might begin to populate it).

Area <i>(e.g. Event Planning, Energy or Waste)</i>	Initiative <i>(There may be many initiatives within each area; each should be SMART – i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Orientated)</i>	Steps required <i>(Be very specific. Anyone should be able to pick up this document and understand what needs be done to progress the initiative)</i>	Person(s) responsible	What does success look like? <i>(What metrics will you use to track progress?)</i>	Due date <i>(Enter a specific date by which the activity should be completed)</i>
(Sample text:) Disposable items	(Sample text:) Investigate alternatives to disposable plates, cutlery, drinking vessels & serviettes	(Sample text:) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enquire with venue whether reusable items available for use 2. If no, contact relevant companies to enquire about cost to hire 3. If hire cost prohibitive or items required not available, investigate disposable items that are sustainably sourced and compostable, biodegradable or recyclable at end of life 	(Sample text:) Professional conference organisers (PCO)	(Sample text:) Alternative to disposables identified and sourced	(Sample text:) 10 June, 2019
	Investigate alternatives to bottled water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enquire with venue whether jugs of water or bulk dispensers available for use for delegates and speakers 2. If no, contact relevant companies to enquire about cost to hire 	PCO	Alternative options to bottled water identified and sourced	10 June, 2019
	Encourage delegates to bring reusable water bottles & coffee cups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop communication material promoting use of reusable water bottles and coffee cups 2. Liaise with PCO to enable inclusion of this material on the conference website and in instructions/information sent to 	Jane B (local organising committee)	Communication material developed Communication material included on website and with delegate information	1 May, 2019 15 August, 2019

Area <i>(e.g. Event Planning, Energy or Waste)</i>	Initiative <i>(There may be many initiatives within each area; each should be SMART – i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Orientated)</i>	Steps required <i>(Be very specific. Anyone should be able to pick up this document and understand what needs be done to progress the initiative)</i>	Person(s) responsible	What does success look like? <i>(What metrics will you use to track progress?)</i>	Due date <i>(Enter a specific date by which the activity should be completed)</i>
		delegates prior to the commencement of the meeting 3. Enquire with venue and nearby cafes about the option of offering discounts on coffee when a reusable cup is used 4. Develop material to promote those coffee suppliers that agree to offer discounts – this could include text for inclusion on the website and in delegate instructions and flyers for display at the meeting		Coffee carts and cafes offering discounts identified Promotional material developed and disseminated	1 May, 2019 15 August, 2019