

## **Media Release: Healthy Futures Calls for Federal Government Support on Hospital Electrification**

**For Immediate Release**

**Date: October 9, 2024**

### **Title: Healthy Futures Urges \$1.5 Million Federal Commitment for Hospital Electrification Feasibility Studies**

Healthy Futures, alongside leading health and climate experts, is calling on the Australian Government to commit \$1.5 million in the 2025/2026 budget to fund feasibility studies for the electrification of nine hospitals across Australia.

The proposal, supported by Federal MPs Dr Sophie Scamps, Dr Helen Haines, Zali Steggall, Kylea Tink, Allegra Spender, Dr Monique Ryan and Senator David Pocock aims to help Australia's healthcare sector, which contributes 7% of the country's total emissions, transition to a cleaner and more resilient future.

The proposal has also received the endorsement of key medical colleges and health organisations, including:

- The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
- The Royal Australasian Colleges of Physicians (RACP)
- The Australian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)
- The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)
- Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA)
- Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA)
- The Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW)

The proposal seeks to pilot the **Electric Hospital Retrofit Program** across nine hospitals in VIC, NT, NSW, QLD, SA, TAS and WA. These hospitals will undergo feasibility studies to estimate costs, savings and emissions reductions, serving as a model for nationwide adaptation. Given the diversity of hospital types, locations and services in Australia, the studies will offer critical insights, helping to prioritise future electrification efforts and ensuring efficient allocation of resources.

#### **Ursula Alquier, Healthy Hospitals Campaigner, stated:**

“Electrifying hospitals is critical to meeting Australia's net zero targets. The health sector not only faces significant emissions from outdated energy systems, but also needs climate resilience in the face of extreme weather events. This pilot program is the first step toward creating safer, healthier and more sustainable healthcare facilities across the country.”

Key outcomes of the program would include substantial emissions reductions—estimated at 14,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually—through the replacement of fossil gas systems, solar energy installation, battery storage and other energy-efficient technologies. These retrofits are also expected to generate cost savings for the healthcare sector and enhance the resilience of hospital infrastructure, particularly in rural and First Nations communities.

**Bob Wilson, National Leader in Energy & Sustainability at Lucid Consulting, Australia commented:**

“All-electric hospitals are healthier for our communities, cost less to run, allow the transition to zero emissions, and can be more resilient than fossil-powered alternatives. They unlock operating cost savings, which can be spent on better healthcare. This pilot program is a critical first step and will provide much needed information to help us deliver better healthcare systems in the future.”

The proposal will be presented to the federal government ahead of the March 2025 budget. Healthy Futures, along with its partners, urges swift action to ensure the initiative is included as part of Australia’s broader climate and health strategy.

### **Key Hospitals in the Electric Hospital Retrofit Program:**

- Echuca Regional Health (VIC)
- Gove District Hospital (NT)
- Broome Health Campus (WA)
- Kurri Kurri Hospital (NSW)
- Blue Mountains Hospital (NSW)
- Modbury Hospital (SA)
- New Norfolk District Hospital (TAS)
- Redland Hospital (QLD)

The studies will provide a critical foundation for health sector electrification, offering detailed insights into how Australia’s healthcare infrastructure can transition away from fossil fuels. With growing support from healthcare workers, unions and local communities, this program has the potential to set the standard for sustainable healthcare.

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For more information, visit [https://www.healthyfutures.net.au/all\\_electric\\_healthy\\_hospitals](https://www.healthyfutures.net.au/all_electric_healthy_hospitals)

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## Quotes:

Kylea Tink MP, Independent Federal Member for North Sydney:

“Electrifying our hospitals is a no-brainer. It can cut costs, reduce emissions, and protect patient care – all while maintaining a world-class health system. Instead of cutting essential staff, like the 50 allied health professionals at risk at North Shore Hospital in my electorate of North Sydney, governments should be exploring future-focused ways to invest in our hospitals to help them reduce costs without cutting patient care. With the healthcare system under pressure and our climate targets on life support, electrifying hospitals is a vital step towards a healthier future for both people and our planet.”

Professor Jennifer Martin, President, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians:

“Ensuring healthcare systems are climate resilient and environmentally sustainable is essential for the continued delivery of high-quality care. The RACP has called for the equitable decarbonisation of healthcare to reach net zero emissions by 2040. Retrofitting existing infrastructure is a critical part of decarbonisation efforts given the longevity of some of the healthcare system’s building stock. We call on the Federal Government to fund Healthy Futures’ Electric Hospital Retrofit Program pilot to support hospitals across Australia reduce their carbon footprints and prepare to face the challenges climate change will continue to bring.”

Dr Simon Judkins, Director of Emergency Medicine at Echuca Hospital:

“This just makes sense. Hospitals need to be leaders in their communities. They need to contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment, not pollute it. And they need to reduce costs. What better way than moving off gas and fossil fuels and embrace clean, renewable sources of electricity to power your healthcare. Regional and rural hospitals need to be able to see their patients in their community, so a car fleet is pivotal. But staff know that they are contributing to an unhealthy environment every time they do their work. What better way to reduce their impact than electrifying the health service and electrifying the car fleet. As the ED Director at Echuca Health, I’m very excited that we might be part of this pilot. Our hospital is embracing a sustainable future and the possibility of retro-fitting the hospital to be clean and green is inspiring.”

Dr Ben Dunne, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS):

“RACS fully endorses this proposal to develop solutions to remove fossil gas supply from our hospitals. The health hazards of fossil fuels should be of great concern to all health professionals and we must rapidly transition to renewable energy for the health of Australia, Aoteroa New Zealand and worldwide”

