

AMA Queensland Sustainable Events Guide

The Australian Medical Association and Australian Medical Association of Queensland host multiple events per year, ranging from international conferences to galas and educational opportunities. These events are crucial for engaging with members and the broader community. However, such events have a significant environmental impact (see Figure 1 below). This is largely due to air travel to events, as well as other factors such as food and paper waste, energy use and utilisation of single use items. As an organisation that recognises the adverse impact of climate change on human health and advocates for increased sustainability in healthcare, it is essential that the AMA/Q prioritise sustainable practice within event and conference planning.

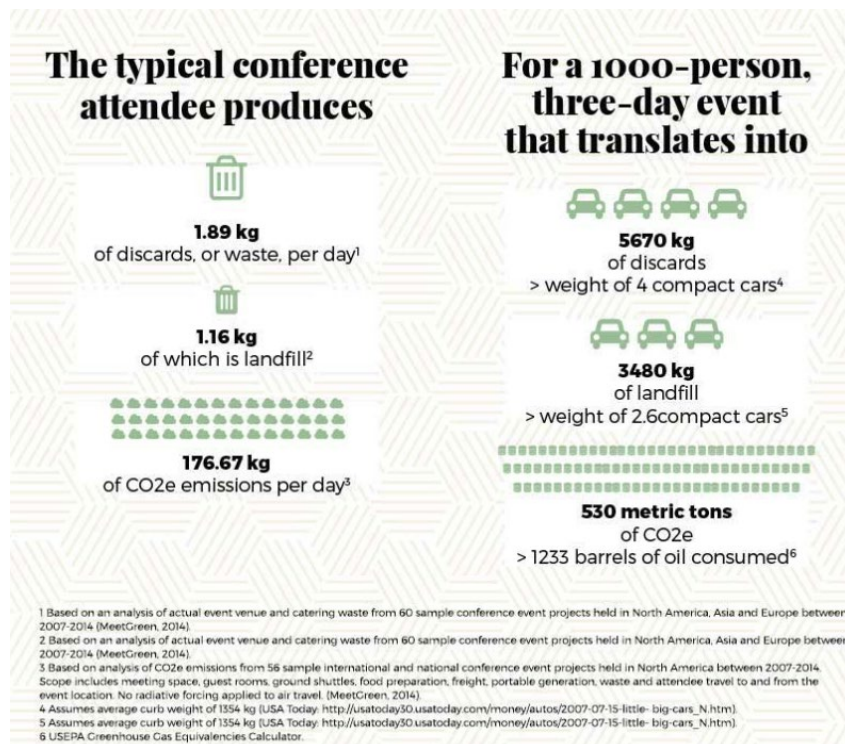


Figure 1: Environmental impact of conferences

A sustainable or 'green' 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.

Sustainability Strategies

Travel and planning

- Understand the carbon footprint of your event
- Avoid having event site at a long distance for most participants e.g. Perth or Darwin for an Australian event
- Consider the use of a Sustainability Checklist such as those developed by Monash² or UQ³
- Cluster events together to reduce individual travel
- Use GIS analysis to consider:
 - where members live,
 - age and
 - member craft groups to add a day to planned specialty conferences e.g. RACGP or RACP annual conferences

Transport

- Host a hybrid event to minimise unnecessary travel
- Suggest participants carbon offset any flights or utilise more sustainable transport options such as public transport e.g. train or tram, and promote these options i.e. provide links to timetables/ information, information on ticketing such as how to get a Go-Card, MyKi or opal
- Utilise venue and accommodation options that maximise active transport options e.g. within walking distance or with good public transport options
- Consider arranging bike hire with event, or including an active transport activity
- Ensure there is bike and scooter safe parking and end of transport facilities e.g. showers
- Arrange ride share / car-pooling from airport to venue to minimise car travel from airport to venue
- Promote benefits of active transport within conference materials
- Highlight for air travellers the CO2 impact of air travel and either encourage CO2 offsets or include a premium cost option in event fee/cost to cover offsets for all CO2 impact of event. Drive 100km in petrol car would be 34 kg CO2e, vs as an example:

Event in Brisbane One-way travel from	Air travel Economy kg CO ₂ e	Air travel Business kg CO ₂ e
Sydney	85	128
Melbourne	128	191
Cairns	182	273

Venue

- Choose a venue that is appropriate for the number of attendees or size of the event
- Check for venue certifications or accreditations for green practices, such as energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and sustainable product use
- Utilise and recommend accommodation options that are Earth Check approved or have similar sustainability accreditation
- Partner with sponsors who share sustainability values and goals

Event promotional materials

- Minimise print resources by making program and other materials available digitally; ensure all paper materials are recycled post conference
- If making banners or similar materials, avoid using specific dates or locations so these can be reused in future
- Encourage exhibitors to avoid single use plastic items or confectionary and to consider sustainability in any giveaway items e.g. keep cups or reusable water bottles
- Avoid single use decoration options e.g. balloons, streamers or ribbons
- Avoid single use plastic name badges, plastic sleeves or lanyards; if using collect and store for reuse at the end of the conference
- Promote sustainability at the event and encourage individuals to do their bit

Catering

- Remind individuals to bring keep cups and reusable water bottles to event
- Consider catering options –
 - Gather accurate catering numbers to minimise excess and waste
 - Limit meat options i.e. beef, lamb and prawn are the most carbon intensive meat products unless purchased from a sustainability producer
 - Aim to use catering with locally sourced produce
 - Use reusable crockery and cutlery or compostable options rather than disposable
 - Consider if food can be donated or composted, ensuring organic waste is redirected into organic use rather than landfill
- Avoid plastic water bottles – provide water fountains with reusable bottles and/or cups
- Offer condiments, sauces, sugar, salt, milk, tea bags and other food items in bulk containers rather than small single use packages

Waste

- Ensure recycling options are accessible and can be utilised by attendees; provide signage for same
- Ensure electrical items such as lights, computers and AV devices are switched off when not in use to conserve energy
- Encourage event attire to suite climate of event so that aircon/ heating can be minimised

Offset

- Consider Climate Active certification for Event to offset its emissions
- Partner with local organisations such as Reforest to offset carbon by planting trees for each attendee
- Utilise other sources of carbon offset

¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Interpretation, *Guidelines on organising sustainable meeting and events at the Commission*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2844/14327>

² Monash University, *Sustainable Events and Meeting*, 2019, [Sustainable-Events-and-Meetings-Guidelines-August-19.pdf \(monash.edu\)](#)

³ University of Queensland, *UQ Unwrapped: Sustainable events guide*. [SustEventsGde.pdf \(uq.edu.au\)](#)