



Kia ora Friend --

The end of another significant year for climate action in Aotearoa is approaching. It is an auspicious time to reflect on the many happenings of 2022, and plan for the year to come.

With the recent conclusion of COP27 came the first ever mention of the human right to a healthy environment and food security in a cover decision, agreed on by all parties. Yet, COP27 failed to deliver a pathway to avoid 1.5°C warming. Despite this, we remain optimistic for the coming year and the numerous opportunities to improve climate-health outcomes in Aotearoa.

As always, we are immensely grateful for the support of our members - thank you for your contributions that have fuelled OraTaiao this past year. We hope that you get some long-awaited rest over the new year, and we look forward to seeing you in a strong year of climate advocacy in 2023.

Mauri tau,

Dermot and Summer,
Co-convenors, OraTaiao: NZ Climate & Health Council

December 2022 Newsletter

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1. Update on OraTaiao activities

Summing up the year

As we approach the end of 2022, it's fair to say that the last 12 months have brought both ups and downs for climate and health advocacy. Domestic highlights included the first National Emissions Budget in May, our first National Adaptation Plan which was released in August, and ongoing discussions and consultation on how to price agricultural emissions. We have seen the adoption of a Targeted Climate Rate by Auckland Council, and the continuation of lower public transport fares during the year.

It's hard to argue that any of these show the level of ambition and inspiration that are needed to properly get to grips with the climate crisis, and the floods in Nelson and on the West Coast, as well as international climate-related disasters such as the European heatwave and the Pakistan floods clearly highlight the future risks. We have a general election to look forward to in 2023, and climate and health must be at the centre of policy discussions leading into that.

AGM renews OraTaiao Board & Te Tiriti commitments for 2023

The 2022 OraTaiao AGM on 24 November welcomed new Board members, thanked those departing, updated our Constitution and discussed plans to better enact Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the year ahead.

Guest speaker Dr Daniel Hikuroa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui, Pākehā) opened with a presentation on weaving together mātauranga Māori with science to help communities in Aotearoa face climate change. Although his talk was not recorded, some of his whakaaro are also contained in a short video clip produced by MAS. You can click on the image to watch it.



Dr Dan Hikuroa: Climate change through a Māori lens

The new officers who joined the Board at the AGM are Peter Bernhardt, Silvia Purdie and Angad Chauhan - nau mai! Peter comes to us from the Board of Melanoma New Zealand. Silvia is a qualified Counsellor and a Provisional Member of the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association, while Angad was introduced in the October OraTaiao Newsletter as a Medical Student and co-founder of the Sustainability Social Group at the University of

Otago, Wellington. Leaving us for now are Dr Mark Smith and Dr Dougal Thorburn. Haere rā! Thank you both for all you have given.

Constitutional changes agreed at the AGM included formalising the “associate member” category. This category has operated in practice for a while for a small number of people granted OraTaiao membership who were not health professionals.

In other AGM business, Co-convenors Dermot Coffey and Summer Wright gave an overview of our work for the year and outgoing Treasurer Mark Smith reported a small net loss of \$1,049.97 on an annual turnover of \$22,714.12. He also presented a break-even budget for the next financial year.

Māori Co-convenor Summer Wright ended the AGM with a report on behalf of the Board's new Te Tiriti sub-committee, outlining how OraTaiao plans to reflect Te Tiriti consistently across our governance policies, strategic plan and constitution.

- [Co-convenors' Annual Report](#)
- [OraTaiao AGM 2022: Te Tiriti Workstream Brief](#)
- Other OraTaiao AGM documents are available on request.

Car-dominated transport can be taxing

Every area of policy and administration has an impact on climate and health, so no corner of Government is too remote for OraTaiao. Why did we make a submission last month to Parliament's Finance and Expenditure Committee on the Taxation (Annual Rates for 2022-23, Platform Economy, and Remedial Matters) Bill (No 2)? Because of the hōhā systemic bias in favour of fossil fuels, which means that diesel and petrol-powered work vehicles and Small Business Car Parking are exempted from Fringe Benefit Tax, while bikes, e-bikes and public transport are not!

- ["Exempt work-supplied bikes from Fringe Benefit Tax" – Submission to Parliament's Finance and Expenditure Committee](#)

Work with the Climate Change Commission bears fruit

Sometimes it takes a long while for climate health advocacy to show results. OraTaiao has been [campaigning since 2019](#) for the Climate Change Commission He Pou a Rangi to include health in its reports to Government. In April this year, the Commission invited OraTaiao to discuss the idea of a Health Advisory Group to inform and advise them, based on local and international data.

After a series of meetings, we can now announce that an initial project has been agreed. A new Health Advisory Group will commission a project looking at health co-benefits from improved air quality through decarbonising energy sources.

The project will have three components – updating the Health and Air Pollution in New Zealand (HAPINZ) Study published by the Ministry for the Environment Manatū Mō Te Taiao, a literature review looking at respiratory problems due to use of natural gas in households and a localised study of health impacts from fossil-fueled industrial heat sources

such as coal boilers. This project will be completed in the first quarter of 2023, providing climate and health stories for the Commission to share.

2. National happenings

Pricing agricultural emissions for human and planetary health

The clock is ticking for the Government on its long-awaited report on pricing agricultural emissions. With a deadline for publication of 31 December locked in by the Climate Change Response Act, an announcement is imminent.

Agricultural methane (from livestock) and nitrous oxide (from synthetic fertilisers and animal urine and dung) make up around half of New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing these emissions is critical to Aotearoa's contribution to limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

Working with our partners in the New Zealand Climate Action Network, particularly Oxfam Aotearoa, OraTaiao made a full submission on the Government's draft proposals. While we were relieved to finally see an end to the decades of delay in pricing agricultural climate pollution, we urged the Government to be guided by a vision of the future centred around human and planetary health. Viewed in this light, the farm-level levy system they proposed needs modification.

Our submission focused on optimising the benefits and minimising the damage to health, wellbeing and equity from agricultural production. Properly designed, a pricing system for agricultural emissions can drive a transition to regenerative farming and re-orient production away from high volume exports to sustainable and quality food production that will nourish local populations. These are goals OraTaiao will continue to promote, whether or not they're reflected in the pending Government announcement. We commend Liz Springford, Ingrid Mulder, and James Hamill for their mahi on this submission.

- Oxfam Aotearoa: "[Help Farming Curb Climate Breakdown](#)"
- OraTaiao: "[Submission on pricing agricultural emissions](#)"



Photo by [Screenroad](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Ditching cars saves lives

The Health and Air Pollution in New Zealand (HAPINZ) Study, reported above as a focus of attention for the new Health Advisory Group of the Climate Change Commission, also features in October's Special Climate Issue of the *British Medical Journal*. "Nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter produced by cars are ailing and killing people every day", writes *BMJ* journalist Zainab Hussain. Based on the latest available complete data (from 2016), the HAPINZ Study found that car pollution causes 3,300 premature deaths every year.

Speaking to the *BMJ*, HAPINZ lead author Gerda Kuschel said the New Zealand framework for tackling car pollution is to "avoid, shift, improve". "If you can avoid the trip, you do that; if you can shift to transport that is less polluting, that's good; and if you can't, you try and improve efficiency—such as taking a diesel bus and making it electric."

In line with this framework, OraTaiao last month joined the Free Fares Coalition – The Aotearoa Collective for Public Transport Equity. Days later, OraTaiao spokesperson Romelli Rodriguez-Jolly was addressing a Parliamentary Select Committee in support of their campaigns.

- *BMJ*: "[How cars take lives in more ways than just crashes](#)"
- OraTaiao: "[OraTaiao joins Free Fares Coalition](#)"
- *bFM*: "[The Free Fares Coalition with OraTaiao's Dermot Coffey](#)"
- OraTaiao: "[Now is the moment for free fares](#)" – Oral submission to the Petitions Committee
- Sign the petition to "[Keep half-price fares for everyone, for good!](#)"

Save the Date – Sustainable Healthcare & Climate Health Conference 2023

After a year off in 2022, Aotearoa's national summit on climate and health is returning next year. Organised by Climate Health Aotearoa, Sustainable Healthcare Aotearoa, the Climate and Health Alliance and OraTaiao, with support from University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtāgo, it's an event not to be missed! Mark your diary now, for 5-6 July, 2023. More details to come.

3. International news

A COP-out for a #HealthyClimate?

Anxiety levels were high even before the 27th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework on Climate Change (COP27) got under way in Egypt last month. In his opening remarks to the conference, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had warned, "We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing. Our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator."

[An analysis](#) published in the journal *Science* found that those "tipping points" include nine global disasters: the collapse of the Greenland, west Antarctic and two parts of the east Antarctic ice sheets, the partial and total collapse of the Gulf Stream currents, Amazon dieback, permafrost collapse and winter sea ice loss in the Arctic. A further seven tipping

points were found that would have severe regional effects. Three other studies published by the UN in October reinforced the message that irreversible climate breakdown is looming.

Heading into COP27 the Global Climate and Health Alliance, the global network which OraTaiao belongs to, co-sponsored a policy prescription for decision-makers. OraTaiao endorses their recommendations as a basis for future policy actions at the global and national level.

Sadly, much of the health advice was ignored by decision-makers gathered at COP27 – although agreement to pursue a fund to compensate developing countries for loss and damage was one bright spot, highlighted by the Health and Climate Network. OraTaiao's own hot take on COP27 is brought to you courtesy of *NZ Doctor Rata Aotearoa*.

- The Guardian: “[World on brink of five ‘disastrous’ climate tipping points, study finds](#)”
- The Guardian: “[World close to ‘irreversible’ climate breakdown, warn major studies](#)”
- Global Climate and Health Alliance: “[Health community policy recommendations for COP27](#)”
- Health and Climate Network: “[Health implications of loss and damage](#)”
- NZ Doctor: “[A COP-out for a #HealthyClimate?](#)”



Photo by [Matthew TenBruggencate](#)

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Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change

COP27 came hard on the heels of the 2022 *Global Report of the Lancet Countdown*.

Published annually, the *Lancet Countdown* on health and climate change is an international, multidisciplinary collaboration, dedicated to monitoring the evolving health profile of climate change, and providing an independent assessment of the delivery of commitments made by governments under the Paris Agreement. This year, it tracks the relationship between health and climate change across 43 indicators, broken down by region and country. Its unparalleled insight into the state of the world's health and climate makes the 35-page report recommended reading – one which OraTaiao has summarised for local audiences.

- The Lancet: "[The 2022 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: health at the mercy of fossil fuels](#)" (free to read on registering)
- Lancet Countdown: "[Tracking the connections between public health and climate change](#)"
- OraTaiao: "[Break the addiction to fossil fuels – 2022 Lancet Countdown Report on Health and Climate Change](#)"

4. Good news, interesting links, books

Compostable, carbon negative drug trays in Tāmaki Makaurau

It may not be the latest news, but some good Global Green and Healthy Hospitals news was shared again last month by our Australasian partners at the Climate and Health Alliance.

Prior to 2020, 175,000 single-use, hard plastic drug trays were being consumed each year across wards and operating theatres at Auckland DHB – and most of those were being sent to landfill. But an initial trial of trays made locally from potato starch in 22 operating theatres proved successful. As a result, the hard plastic trays have now been removed from the hospital product catalogue. Not only does this remove plastic waste from the environment, the compostable trays are actually cheaper and carbon negative (one 25g tray sequesters the amount of CO₂ contained in 110m³ of atmosphere).

- Global Green and Healthy Hospitals: "[Greening Operating Rooms – Compostable Drug Trays Auckland District Health Board, New Zealand](#)"



Compostable drug trays, by Earthpac.

Photo: [Facebook](#)

Short films to lift your spirits

After a disappointing COP27, *The Guardian's* weekly environmental newsletter, "Down to Earth", reflected on one lesson from the conference. "The climate crisis cannot be solved by Cop negotiations alone," wrote *Guardian* video producers Jess Gormley and Ekaterina Ochagavia, "but instead requires local action on the ground; individuals and communities, changing the way we live and influencing those around them." With this in mind, they offered a documentary on COP and five inspiring local stories, free to watch from their archive.

- [Whose Job is it to Save the Planet?](#) (2022, 16 minutes)

- [Eve](#) (2021, 21 minutes)
- [The Return](#) (2021, 17 minutes)
- [The Wolf Dividing Norway](#) (2020, 29 minutes)
- [Sam and the Plant Next Door](#) (2019, 23 minutes)
- [Lady of the Gobi](#) (2022, 25 minutes)

In closing, OraTaiao sends Season's Greetings to one and all and wishes you a Happy Gregorian New Year chock full of climate health progress.

This newsletter was written by Grant Brookes.

OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate and Health Council
<http://www.orataiao.org.nz/>

OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate and Health Council comprises health professionals in Aotearoa/New Zealand calling for urgent and fair climate action - with real health gains now and for our future.