

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

7 April 2022

World Health Day – response to Minister Stephen-Smith Exec Motion

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2022>

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

World Health Day 2022 is recognised by the World Health Organisation as a day for our planet and for our health.

The connection between the two cannot be understated – what is good for us as humans correlates directly with what is good for our environment: fresh healthy food; sustainable transport; supporting local business; natural fibre products; cooling our neighbourhoods and cities with shade canopies... the list goes on.

The relationship and balance between the health of our community and the health of our planet are inextricably and intrinsically linked.

The World Health Organisation has estimated that more than 13 million deaths around the world each year are caused by environmental issues.

Health underpins our fundamental being and is critical to our quality of life – including our social connections.

I'm pleased to work with a Government that incorporates well-being principles into every Budget consideration.

In Canberra, we're very lucky to live in a city that has relatively clean air, clean water and a generally healthy environment. A Motion I moved in the Assembly last year – to investigate the opportunity for Canberra to be recognised as a 'National Park City' - is testament to this.

However, we also need to acknowledge that there is always more we can do and that, across the world, the climate crisis is a health crisis.

I'm pleased to be involved with a loosely formed ACT group: Women in Climate and Health. I co-hosted a networking breakfast for this group last June and am looking forward to co-hosting another one this June here at the Assembly, with a guest panel to chat about reducing consumption in the food, apparel and building sectors.

I'm excited about the opportunities ahead to reinvent, reimagine and innovate for healthier environments which contribute to healthier people and healthier communities.

It would be remiss not to also acknowledge that World Health Day has taken on a whole new meaning amidst the current pandemic.

In recent years we have all been required to consider our health – and that of our communities – in a way we have never had to before. We've been required to consider how our actions affect not only our own health, but those of our family, friends and neighbours.

The Public Health Directions of this Government have been fundamental in keeping our community healthy; and I commend everyone in our community for doing their part to stay home when required, isolate and quarantine, to test, to get vaccinated and to maintain social distancing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, I encourage all Canberrans to take some time today to consider where, on a sliding scale, they consider their personal health currently sits; and to consider any actions they might be able to take to improve their own health by also considering what they can do to improve the health of our environment.

Thank you.