



ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH
AUSTRALIA

Pre-Budget Submission 2026-27

Driving Economic Growth through Preventive Health:
Strengthening the Environmental Health Workforce for our
Sustainable Healthy Future

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National President
Environmental Health Australia (EHA)

January 2026

“Environmental Health Officers protect people from hazards in their environment. This is an accredited profession with 100% employment rate for graduates”.

Melissa Burn FEHA, National President, Environmental Health Australia

About Environmental Health Australia (EHA)

About us

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) is the premier professional organisation for environmental health practitioners in Australia. Established in 1936, EHA provides leadership and support to its members, Fellows and Life Fellows aiming to enhance environmental health and safety in communities through advocacy, promotion, education, and leadership.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)

EHOs are vital, frontline authorised persons whose work directly safeguards the public's health and prevents disease. Operating under legislative frameworks such as Public Health Acts, they enforce regulations related to food safety, sanitation, infectious disease control, non-communicable disease control, environmental management, and occupational health. Their expertise ensures communities remain protected from preventable health hazards, mitigating strain on the medical system and saving lives.

Mission and Vision

EHA's mission is to develop and maintain a quality environmental health workforce and advocate for enhanced environmental health standards for all communities in Australia. The organisation aspires to be a leader in environmental health, creating and sustaining healthy communities.

Structure and Governance

EHA operates as a registered Australian not-for-profit company, governed by a board of directors representing each state and territory association. The organisation is a founding member of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH), which includes 45 environmental health associations worldwide.

Professional Development and Accreditation

EHA offers accredited courses for those pursuing a career as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO). These courses are designed to prepare students for professional roles in environmental health, including positions in local and state governments, the private

sector, and defence forces. The organisation also provides professional tools and resources to support ongoing development.

Advocacy and Resources

EHA is committed to enhancing environmental health advocacy through the development of policies, policy networks, relationships, and advocacy mechanisms. The organisation provides resources such as the FoodSafe program, the Australian Food Safety Assessment (AFSA), and the I'm Alert Food Safety Program to support food safety management.

For more information, visit the official EHA website: www.eh.org.au

Acknowledgement

EHA acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.

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“At Geelong and Hepburn, vacant EHO positions (which both councils have had difficulty filling with appropriately qualified staff) made the situation worse. Geelong has had 7 vacant EHO positions out of 12 and Hepburn one out of 2. Both councils cited the inability to fill these positions for over a year as the key reason for not meeting their Food Act responsibilities”.

SGS Economics and Planning. (2022). 2022 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey: Final Report (p. 68). Australian Local Government Association. <https://www.alga.com.au>

Executive Summary

Preventable environmental health risks cost Australia an estimated **\$15.4 billion** annually, including **\$2.4 billion from foodborne illnesses** (see Appendix A). This staggering figure encompasses healthcare expenses, lost economic productivity, and investigation costs.

This proposal for the 2026-27 budget emphasises the need to address the acute shortage of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) to mitigate the economic burden. Key measures include job placement support, workforce and professional skills analysis, sustainable workforce representation, and strengthening pathways to accredited education. In addition, the proposal calls for sustainable funding for 'implementation research' to drive legislative, regulatory, and policy reforms, ultimately tackling the environmental health challenges contributing to this significant cost.

The need for funding to address environmental health risks to productivity costs in this budget is urgent, as a proportion of the preventive health investment, environmental health profession and workforce funding historically is very small, disparate, uncertain and is decreasing, leading to this critical component of the health sector gradually experiencing a significant professional decline. Recently, three major universities offering EHA accredited environmental health science programs within their respective medical schools have closed, resulting in only eight EHA accredited offerings nationally, alarmingly with one local course in its infancy available to meet qualification as an authorised person (Environmental Health Officer) to replace and comprehensively deliver the accredited professionals for the regulatory workforce needs servicing the

people in Victoria¹². There is no accredited course available to deliver the professional skills required for the environmental health profession in Tasmania.³

The role of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) is continuously evolving. During the COVID-19 pandemic, EHOs across Australia played a key role in enforcing quarantine infection control measures by inspecting compliance of businesses and public spaces. Additionally, there is a growing integration of environmental health expertise needed within the One Health framework, where EHOs help mitigate the risk of zoonotic diseases, biosecurity threats, and support pandemic preparedness⁴. This approach ensures coordinated outbreak investigations that involve relevant medical, veterinary and environmental health officers in a multi-disciplinary strategy for managing one-health threats. Recently, EHOs have also taken on additional regulatory responsibilities, including tobacco control, implementation of Australian Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code – Standard 4.2.6, 4.2.7, 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 for sprouts, berries, leafy vegetable, and melon producers in regional and rural areas. These standards mandate stricter food safety practices, such as food handler training, Food Safety Supervisors, and comprehensive record-keeping.

As a result, EHOs are tasked with ensuring compliance and conducting more frequent inspections, reflecting an increased time commitment and expanding responsibilities.

The national EHO workforce, which comprises of well over 4,300 tertiary-qualified authorised officers across Australia⁵, sits within the sector of occupational and environmental health professionals which is projected to grow by 11.2% in the period 2023-2028⁶. However, a national workforce shortage of up to 30% of positions unfilled, many teams understaffed, and approximately 40% of current Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) are aged 50 or older retiring over the next decade, exacerbated further in rural and regional areas has been identified through multiple workforce reviews and

¹ Herald Sun. (2023, January 18). *Swinburne University's proposal to scrap environmental health diploma under scrutiny*. Herald Sun. <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/victoria-education/tertiary/swinburne-universitys-proposal-to-scrap-environmental-health-diploma-under-scrutiny/news-story/f859b5ea704f06167b27d47d2885c636>

² Environmental Health Australia. (2023, November 7). *EHA position statement: Brisbane, QLD*. Environmental Health Australia. <https://www.eh.org.au/documents/item/1618#:~:text=BRISBANE%2C%20QLD%2C%207%20NOVEMBER%2C,preventative%20support%20for%20public%20health>.

³ University of Tasmania. (2024). *Graduate Diploma of Environmental Health (M6Q)*. University of Tasmania. <https://www.utas.edu.au/courses/chm/courses/m6q-graduate-diploma-of-environmental-health?year=2024>

⁴ Liu, Q., Wang, X., & Zhang, L. (2022). A generalizable One Health framework for the control of zoonotic diseases. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 10616. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-12619-1>

⁵ Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. (n.d.). *Environmental Health Officers (251311)*. Job and Skills Australia. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/occupations/251311-environmental-health-officers>

⁶ Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. (n.d.). *Environmental Health Officers (251311)*. Job and Skills Australia. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/occupations/251311-environmental-health-officers>

pre-budget submissions by peak local government bodies, local and state government workforce reports⁷⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹.

This presents an opportunity for the government to directly align this funding to its progress on the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030, which aims to direct 5% of total health expenditure to preventive health by 2030 (see Appendix B). Expanding the environmental health workforce and EHAs stated proposals can be expected to deliver an ROI of 14.3:1¹², saving substantial public healthcare funds through these preventive health initiatives (see Appendix A).

By investing in this professional preventive health workforce to tackle the enormous productivity cost and through funding the proposed evidence-based innovations, Australian communities can be assured of the long-term sustainability of Australia's most influential profession on public health, continue to protect our world class health system, promote well-being, and increase preparedness for emerging health threats. These initiatives will empower the EHO workforce to address both the communicable and preventable non-communicable health risks, fostering healthier more productive communities and advancing our shared national public health goals.

The time to act is now. Failing to support this critical preventive health profession will only result in increasing healthcare costs for Australian communities and place unnecessary pressure on our healthcare infrastructure. Let's invest in Environmental Health Officers to ensure a safer, healthier future for all Australians.

⁷ Victorian Auditor-General's Office. (2023, June). *Regulating food safety* (p. 18). Victorian Auditor-General's Office. <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications>

⁸ Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey, New South Wales Report. (2022). *2022 Local government workforce skills and capability survey* (p. 68). New South Wales Government. <https://www.lgsa.org.au>

⁹ Flinders University. (2021, December). *Environmental Health Officers' (EHOs) response to COVID-19: A public health workforce needs assessment to ensure sustainability and future preparedness* (p. 51). Flinders University. <https://www.flinders.edu.au>

¹⁰ Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). (2024). *Pre-budget submission 2024-25* (p. 20). Australian Local Government Association. <https://alga.com.au/app/uploads/ALGA-Pre-Budget-Submission-24-25.pdf>

¹¹ Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA). (2024). *Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25* (p. 3). Western Australian Local Government Association. <https://walga.asn.au/getattachment/Policy-Advocacy/Our-Advocacy-Positions/State-and-Federal-Budgets/State-Budget/WALGA-State-Budget-Submission-2024-25.pdf?lang=en-AU>

¹² Reich, M. R., & Takahashi, K. (2017). *The economics of health promotion: An overview*. *The Lancet*, 389(10067), 1671-1678. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28356325/>

“EHOs are not an optional component of Australia’s health infrastructure; they are a necessity. Politicians have a moral, economic, and political obligation to provide the funding required to ensure the profession’s survival, expand this workforce and modernise the EHOs role in our public health acts and associated legislation to address contemporary challenges”.

James Williams MPH, FEHA - Director, Environmental Health Australia

Pre Budget Request – Overview

Australia’s public health infrastructure urgently requires enhancement, and the most effective way to strengthen this infrastructure is through investment in an effective environmental health workforce. The health and productivity of our nation depend on it. Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) play a critical role in protecting public health, but the current workforce is insufficient to meet growing demands.

This proposal calls for an investment of **\$231.5 million over four years** to rebuild and strengthen the EHO workforce, improve public health outcomes, contribute to the one-health framework and stimulate economic growth. The proposed funding will deliver a robust return on investment, directly benefiting Australia’s health systems and national productivity. Below is a breakdown of the budget and the projected outcomes, showcasing how this funding will make a substantial impact.

Table 1. Financial Summary*

Investment Area	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total (AUD)
Proposal 1. Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap	4.375m	4.375m	4.375m	4.375m	17.45m
Proposal 2. Reinstating and Strengthening Education Pathways	55.125m	22.625m	30.125m	37.625m	145.5m
Proposal 3. Environmental Health Matters Campaign	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	1.5m	6m
Proposal 4. Asia-Pacific Capacity-Building	2.25m	2.25m	2.25m	2.25m	9m
Proposal 5. Endowments and Scholarships	53.5m	0	0	0	53.5m
Total	98.525m	42.125m	42.125m	42.125m	231.5m

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Projected Outcomes.

1. Productivity Gains:

The Productivity Commission conservatively estimated that **Australia's GDP could be increased by \$4 billion per year** if the health of people in fair or poor health was improved¹³. As the EHO workforce expands and public health outcomes improve, this investment is expected to directly contribute to national productivity growth and healthcare savings.

2. Workforce Impact:

Increase the EHO Workforce: The proposed budget measure will innovatively fund the **addition of 1,000 university places** over the next four years with graduates moving into the EHO workforce throughout the next decade. This will address the critical shortage of EHOs and ensure the workforce is adequately prepared to meet growing public health demands.

3. Public Health Impact:

Reduction in Foodborne Illnesses: The funding is expected to significantly reduce foodborne illnesses, resulting in better public health and less pressure on the primary healthcare system. For instance, even a modest 15% reduction in the annual productivity cost of foodborne illnesses (valued at \$2.4 billion¹⁴) could result in **savings of \$360 million annually** in this one aspect alone.

4. Improved Environmental Health Resilience:

Investments in public health interventions, particularly in health protection, typically yield a median **ROI of 14.3:1**¹⁵. This makes funding to strengthen environmental health systems in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas and Asia Pacific nations highly impactful, enhancing resilience and ensuring these communities are better equipped to tackle emerging public health challenges.

¹³ Productivity Commission. (2017). *Shifting the dial: 5 Year Productivity Review, Report No. 84*. Canberra. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity-review/report>

¹⁴ Food Standards Australia New Zealand. (2019). *Cost of foodborne illness in Australia: Annual report*. Retrieved from <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au>

¹⁵ Reich, M. R., & Takahashi, K. (2017). *The economics of health promotion: An overview*. *The Lancet*, 389(10067), 1671-1678. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28356325/>

Pre Budget Recommendations

1. EHA urges the Federal Government to allocate **\$231.5 million** over four years to rebuild Australia's EHO workforce, invest in our profession's education, increase representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the EHO workforce and lead environmental health initiatives across the Asia Pacific region.
2. EHA supports the Australian CDC to improve the way Australia prepares for and responds to health emergencies, including disease outbreaks and pandemics. EHA was a contributor to the CDC consultation on its roles and functions¹⁶ and are continuing to contribute to the Australian CDC through participation on the One Health Surveillance System (OHSS) Working Group. As Environmental Health Officers are Australia's principal frontline workforce for disease control, EHA continues to advocate for environmental health as core to its mission and vital to its function¹⁷.
3. EHA supports the activities and budget asks of CAHA, the peak body on climate change and health in Australia, as detailed in their 2026 / 27 Pre-budget Submission: *Budget initiatives for a healthy, sustainable and just future*. EHA supports CAHA on these measures as EHOs will be key contributors to the development of climate resilience strategies, health preparedness plans, and policies that prioritise environmental health in a changing climate¹⁸.

¹⁶ Environmental Health Australia (EHA). (n.d.). *EHA submission on the roles and functions of an Australian CDC*. Environmental Health Australia. <https://www.eh.org.au/news/eha-submission-on-the-roles-and-functions-of-an-australian-cdc>

¹⁷ Ryan, B. J., & Williams, J. (2023). *How an Australian Centre for Disease Control can reinforce environmental health systems and services*. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 85(7), 42–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvhlth.2023.03.004>

¹⁸ Flinders University. (2023). *Climate change and health: Challenges to the local government environment*. Retrieved January 23, 2025, from <https://researchnow.flinders.edu.au/en/publications/climate-change-and-health-challenges-to-the-local-government-envi>

Proposal 1: Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap

Building the Future of Environmental Health

This proposal outlines a four-year funding request of **\$17.45** million to strengthen Australia's Environmental Health workforce and address the growing service gap. Below is the proposed budget, excluding EHA Administration and Overhead Costs (Program Management and Oversight, Administrative Support, Monitoring and Evaluation), to support the key initiatives under this proposal.

1. Know Our Numbers

Objective: Conduct a comprehensive National Workforce Study to map existing workforce gaps, review skills and knowledge, projected needs, and the impact of regional and rural shortages.

Budget:

- Study Design and Implementation: \$500,000
- Data Collection and Analysis: \$1,000,000
- Final Report and Recommendations: \$500,000

Total Cost (4 years): \$2,000,000

2. Data for Action

Objective: Develop a comprehensive National Workforce Data Set to guide workforce planning, funding decisions, and targeted policy interventions.

Budget:

- Data Infrastructure and IT Systems Setup: \$750,000
- Ongoing Data Collection and Analysis: \$1,250,000
- Reporting and Policy Integration: \$500,000

Total Cost (4 years): \$2,500,000

3. Boosting Professional and Regional Resilience:

Objective: Design a pathway to adopt an Environmental Health Services Agreement, binding a commitment from the Commonwealth of Australia and a scheme to innovatively and sustainably fund the professional and workforce needs of local governments including in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas.

- a. **Part 1.** Agreement. Commonwealth, EHA, State governments, Local Government Associations and Australia's 537 councils adopt a (renegotiated 4 yearly basis) environmental health workforce and services funding agreement.

Budget:

- Stakeholder Consultations and Negotiations: \$400,000
- Legal and Administrative Costs for Agreement Development: \$600,000
- Initial Funding for Agreement Rollout: \$2,000,000

- b. **Part 2.** Design and pilot a Commonwealth supported environmental health inspection fee scheme with an innovative and targeted mechanism that provides sustainable financial support to eligible local government areas through the claiming of an EHO inspection fee for each inspection undertaken, thereby incentivising environmental health regulatory compliance inspections in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote settings.

Budget:

- Scheme Design and Testing: \$1,000,000
- Implementation Costs for Local Governments: \$2,500,000
- Incentive Program Setup: \$1,000,000

Total Cost (4 years): \$7,500,000

4. One Employer, One Mission

Objective: Design, pilot and implement a Single Employer Model (SEM) scheme for cadet EHOs to be placed in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas.

Budget:

- Scheme Design and Pilot Development: \$800,000
- Recruitment and Training Costs for Cadet EHOs: \$2,000,000
- Ongoing Support and Mentorship: \$1,500,000
- Evaluation and Reporting: \$700,000

Total Cost (4 years): \$5,000,000

Table 2. Total Budget Request Over 4 Years*

Initiative	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total (AUD)
1. National Workforce Study	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
2. National Workforce Data Set	750,000	750,000	750,000	250,000	2,500,000
3. Boosting Professional and Regional Resilience					
- Part 1: Health Services Agreement	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
- Part: EHO Inspection Fee Scheme	1,250,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	5,000,000
4. Single Employer Model (SEM) for Cadet EHOs	800,000	800,000	800,000	800,000	3,200,000
Administration and Overhead Costs	500,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	2,750,000
Total Budget Request	4,800,000	5,050,000	4,050,000	3,550,000	17,450,000

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Why EHA?

As the peak national body for environmental health, EHA has a deep understanding of workforce challenges, expertise in professional development, and an established network across state and local governments, academia, and industry. EHA is uniquely positioned to lead these initiatives, ensuring accountability, impact, and alignment with national priorities.

Conclusion

This comprehensive four-year funding proposal aims to address the urgent needs of the Environmental Health Officer workforce, particularly in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas. Through strategic workforce design, data-driven decision-making, and sustainable financial models, we can ensure a long-term, effective, and resilient EHO workforce that will help protect Australia's health and well-being, drive innovation, and contribute to the goals of the National Preventive Health Strategy.

Proposal 2: Reinstating and Strengthening Education Pathways

Educating the Next Generation Protectors of Public Health

This proposal seeks to strengthen and reinstate critical education pathways for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) across Australia, with a focus on reopening accredited university courses, expanding training options, and providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The total budget request for this initiative is **\$145.5 million** over four years. Below is the detailed budget breakdown.

1. Bring Back the Classrooms:

Objective: Reopen and strengthen Environmental Health Australia (EHA) accredited university courses across Australia to enrol 250 new places annually and ensure schools can meet academic and operational needs over time.

Details: Directly inject funds to support new places at universities over 12 university schools (8 existing schools, 3 schools to be requested to reinstate the accredited course and 1 new school).

- **Bond:** This one-off funding would be providing each university with an EHA accredited course \$1 million dollars as a bond (adjusted annually with CPI) to ensure the sustainability and development of its environmental health program. If the university were to close or discontinue the course, it would be required to return the bond amount (adjusted for CPI) to the government, ensuring that the funds are used effectively for the intended purpose. (est. \$12 million)
- **Infrastructure payment:** schools awarded these new places receive a one Infrastructure Payment: Schools granted these new places will receive a one-time payment to support additional staffing for curriculum development, cover costs related to onboarding, and fund any new course infrastructure required. The funding level will be tailored to meet the specific needs identified by each school in their application for these new places. (est. \$28 million)

Budget: \$40 million (one off).

2. Unlocking Opportunity:

Objective: Fund 250 EHA administered scholarships for students to undertake accredited training by funding EHA accredited university undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Offer scholarships annually (\$7.5 million/year). Assuming \$30,000~ cost per student place per annum.

Budget: \$75,000,000 over four years. NB: figure is cumulative.

Empowering the Regions:

Objective: expand training options through innovative, flexible study options supporting an EHA cadetship to graduate pathway.

Budget: \$ 24,000,000 over four years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support:

Closing the Gap, Building Careers: Foster health equity through professional career pathways.

Objective: Investing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental health practitioner and increasing identified representation in EHA accredited courses, within the EHO workforce and better health equity through professional career pathways.

Develop partnerships with TAFEs and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to promote the Aboriginal and Torres Strait health worker degree pathway.

Budget: \$ 5,000,000 over four years

5. Program Development and Mentorship: \$ 250,000 per year

To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through mentorship and tailored pathways.

6. Scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students: \$1,000,000 per year to offer 32 scholarships across Australia to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the EHO workforce.

Total Cost (4 years): \$ 6,000,000

Table 3. Total Budget Request Over 4 Years*

Initiative	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total (AUD)
1. Bring Back the Classrooms (University Program 'One Off' Bond and Infrastructure Funding) Averaged over 4 years	40,000,000	0	0	0	One off 40,000,000
2. Scholarships	7,500,000	15,000,000	22,500,000	30,000,000	75,000,000
4. Cadetship Program Expansion	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	24,000,000
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	6,000,000
6. Administration and Overhead Costs	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
Total	55,125,000	22,625,000	30,125,000	37,625,000	145,500,000

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Why EHA?

EHA is uniquely placed to partner with universities and all levels of government to align educational pathways with industry and community needs. As the accrediting body for environmental health degrees in Australia, EHA ensures programs meet rigorous professional standards and deliver a pipeline of work-ready graduates.

Conclusion

This proposal outlines a comprehensive four-year plan to reinstate and strengthen education pathways for Environmental Health Officers, ensuring the future of Australia's public health and one-health workforce. By reopening EHA-accredited courses, expanding training options, providing scholarships, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner representation, this proposal will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the EHO workforce and address critical public health challenges. With a total budget request of **\$145.5 million** over four years, these investments will secure a healthier, safer future for all Australians through an empowered and well-equipped workforce.

Proposal 3. Environmental Health Matters Campaign

Inspiring the Next Generation

This proposal outlines a comprehensive four-year budget request of **\$6 million** to launch a nationwide awareness campaign aimed at promoting Environmental Health Officer (EHO) careers and emphasising their vital role in serving the Australian community in public health.

1. Part 1: From Invisible to Indispensable

Objective: Launch a nationwide awareness campaign to promote EHO professional careers and highlight their critical role serving the Australian community in public health.

Budget:

- **Media Campaign Development (Targeting School Leavers and Career Changers):** \$ 1,000,000
Develop creative media campaigns, including digital ads, TV, and radio spots.
- **Regional Outreach and Promotion:** \$ 1,200,000
Targeted campaigns for regional communities, including regional TV, radio, and online media.
- **Content Creation and Distribution:** \$ 500,000
Develop promotional materials, videos, brochures, and educational content.
- **Public Relations and Social Media Management:** \$ 300,000
Engagement with media outlets and managing social media platforms to spread awareness.

Total Cost (4 Years) for Part 1: \$3,000,000

2. Part 2: Protect, Prevent, Promote – National Environmental Health Literacy Campaign

Objective: Launch a national environmental health literacy campaign by partnering with professional organisations, schools and local councils for outreach.

Budget:

- **Partnership Development with Professional Organisations and Local Councils:** \$ 1000,000

- Engagement with EHA, local councils, and professional organisations to promote the campaign.
- **Community Outreach and Education:** \$ 800,000
Public workshops, seminars, and informational sessions to improve environmental health literacy.
- **Media Outreach and Educational Materials:** \$1,000,000
Creating educational content, including documentaries, articles, and online content targeting a wider audience.
- **Campaign Monitoring and Impact Measurement:** \$200,000
Ongoing evaluation of the campaign's reach, effectiveness, and community engagement.

Total Cost (4 Years) for Part 2: \$ 3,000,000

Table 4. Total Budget Request Over 4 Years*

Initiative	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total (AUD)
Part 1: From Invisible to Indispensable	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	3,000,000
Part 2: Protect, Prevent, Promote	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	3,000,000
Total Budget	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	6,000,000

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Why EHA?

As the peak body representing EHOs, EHA is the natural leader for raising awareness of the profession. EHA's established communication channels, industry networks, and professional credibility make it the ideal organisation to design and deliver an impactful awareness campaign.

Conclusion

This four-year budget proposal of **\$6 million** outlines the strategy for a nationwide EHO awareness campaign. By targeting key groups such as school leavers, career changers, and regional communities, this campaign will elevate the importance of EHO careers and educate Australians about the critical role EHOs play in public health. With the backing of Environmental Health Australia (EHA), the ideal leader for this initiative, the campaign will drive awareness and inspire the next generation of public health protectors, ensuring a sustainable and impactful future for environmental health in Australia.

Proposal 4: Asia Pacific Environmental Health Advocacy and Professional Association Capacity Building

Healthy Asia Pacific, Healthy Future

This proposal outlines the budget for a four-year initiative aimed at building leadership and workforce capacity for environmental health in Asia Pacific nations through education, training, and collaboration. The total budget request is **\$9 million** over four years.

Part 1. Regional Health System Resilience: Build capacity and partnerships to strengthen environmental health in the Asia Pacific.

Objective: Collaborate with regional partner governments to establish environmental health associations, organise an EHA-led Asia Pacific Environmental Health Forum, and develop training programs for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and other environmental health professionals.

Budget:

• **Establish Environmental Health Associations:** \$1,500,000

Provide support for the creation and development of four national environmental health ‘professional’ associations (volunteer and not for profit) in Asia Pacific nations including logistical and administrative costs to initiate meetings and networking events.

• **EHA-Led Asia Pacific Environmental Health Forum:** \$2,000,000

Assist with facilitation of Asia Pacific based environmental health associations to kickstart an annual forum to bring together Asia Pacific-based EHOs, government representatives, and industry leaders for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and policy development.

• **Training Program Development and Delivery:** \$2,500,000

Design and deliver comprehensive training programs for EHOs and environmental health professionals, covering key topics such as disease prevention, environmental management, tobacco control, climate change, biosecurity, one-health, and sanitation practices.

- **Partnership Development and Implementation:** \$500,000

Work with Asia Pacific governments, Asia Pacific universities and other local stakeholders to implement and sustain training initiatives, partnerships, and regional networks including meetings and networking events.

Total Cost for Part 1: \$6,500,000

Part 2. United for Health: Protect the health of our Asia Pacific neighbours through shared practices.

Objective: Protect the health of Asia Pacific nations through shared environmental health practices by providing EHA resources and mentorship for Asia Pacific-based EHOs.

Budget:

- **Resource Development and Distribution:** \$800,000

Develop and distribute educational materials, best practices guidelines, and technical resources for EHOs across the Asia Pacific region.

- **Mentorship Programs:** \$1,200,000

Establish and run mentorship programs, connecting Australian EHOs with their counterparts in the Asia Pacific to offer ongoing guidance, support, and knowledge exchange.

- **Annual Regional Workshops and Conferences:** \$500,000

Organise and host workshops and conferences focused on environmental health challenges, with a focus on sharing knowledge and practices for improving health systems.

Total Cost for Part 2: \$2,500,000

Table 5. Total Budget Request Over 4 Years*

Initiative	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total (AUD)
Part 1: Regional Health System Resilience					
- Establish Environmental Health Associations	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	1,500,000
- EHA-Led Asia Pacific Environmental Health Forum	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
- Training Program Development and Delivery	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,500,000
- Partnership Development and Implementation	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000

Part 2: United for Health					
- Resource Development and Distribution	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
- Mentorship Programs	300,000	400,000	400,000	100,000	1,200,000
- Annual Regional Workshops and Conferences	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
Total	2,125,000	2,225,000	2,225,000	1,925,000	9,000,000

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Why EHA?

As a founding member of the IFEH¹⁹, EHA has longstanding ties with environmental health associations across the globe. EHA regularly welcomes professionals across the Asia Pacific to its courses and conferences. With extensive experience in capacity-building initiatives, particularly through its flagship Environmental Health Disaster Management (EHDM) course in Townsville²⁰, EHA has a proven track record of delivering impactful training and mentorship programs.

Through AusAID, the Australian Government provides development assistance to 75 countries. Australian aid has five strategic goals Consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, Australia's aid program is guided by the following five core strategic goals:

- *Saving lives:* Good health does not come about by chance. It depends on quality food, safe water and sanitation, prevention of disease and access to trained health workers.
- *Opportunities for all:* Education is fundamental to everything we do. It is the key to beating poverty and the greatest investment we can make for the world's future.
- *Sustainable economic development:* Shared and sustained economic growth remains the most powerful long-term solution to reducing poverty.

¹⁹ International Federation of Environmental Health. (n.d.). Membership. Retrieved January 23, 2025, from <https://www.ifeh.org/scripts/member.asp?type=1>

²⁰ Environmental Health Australia Queensland. (n.d.). Retrieved January 29, 2026, from <https://www.ehaqld.org.au/documents/item/1726>

- *Effective governance:* Effective governance means having strong systems in place and skilled people to provide accountable and transparent public services ranging from record keeping through to justice systems.
- *Humanitarian and disaster response:* Australia makes a vital contribution to international efforts to help people affected by disasters and conflicts.

Through these efforts, EHA contributes to strengthening regional health resilience and solidifying Australia's leadership in the Asia Pacific.

Conclusion

This proposal for a **\$9 million** investment over four years will strengthen environmental health in the Asia Pacific through education, training, and collaboration. By building regional resilience and fostering shared practices across Asia Pacific nations, we can enhance public health, increase leadership capacity, and empower environmental health professionals to tackle critical health challenges. EHA's extensive experience in capacity building and its established relationships with Asia Pacific nations make it the ideal leader for this initiative. The proposal will also contribute to Australia's ongoing leadership in the Asia Pacific, ensuring long-term benefits for both regional health systems and the communities they serve.

Proposal 5: Endowments and Scholarships

Funding Futures: Investing in the Profession and our Environmental Health Talent

This proposal outlines the establishment of three key endowments:

- a Scholarship Endowment
- a Research Endowment, and
- an Operational Sustainability Endowment

These funds will ensure long-term support for environmental health students, implementation research initiatives, and the operational sustainability of Environmental Health Australia (EHA). The total budget request is **\$53.5 million**, with a focus on creating a perpetual fund that delivers lasting impact through scholarships, research, and sustain the mission of professional body to its members and the Australian community.

1. Scholarship Endowment

Learn and Lead: Provide scholarships for aspiring environmental health practitioners.

Objective: Establish a fund of **\$16 million** to support 40 annual scholarships of \$20,000 each, specifically for environmental health students committed to serving under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas.

Budget Breakdown:

- **Initial Fund Establishment:** \$16,000,000 (one-time allocation)
 - This amount will be placed into a perpetual fund that generates the necessary returns to support 40 scholarships annually.
- **Annual Scholarship Support:** \$800,000 per year
 - Once interest is mature, this funding will be used to support 40 scholarships annually, with students from rural, regional, and remote areas being prioritised (\$20,000 per student for 40 students).

Annual Impact: Fund environmental health students committed to under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas.

Total Cost (4 years): \$16,000,000 (initial fund)

2. Research Endowment

Objective: Allocate **\$30 million** to fund research on workforce development, public health policy translation, one-health initiatives, and best practices for environmental health.

Budget:

Perpetual Potential: Establish endowments to sustain workforce growth and innovation.

- **Initial Fund Establishment: \$30,000,000 (one-time allocation)**
 - This fund will be used to support competitive research grants to universities, think tanks, and environmental health institutions focused on key areas such as workforce development, one-health initiatives, and public health policy.
- **Annual Research Grant Allocation: \$1,000,000 per year**
 - Competitive grants will be provided to institutions undertaking impactful research on environmental health.

Annual Impact: Support competitive research grants to universities and think tanks.

Total Cost (4 years): \$30,000,000 (initial fund)

3. Operational Sustainability Endowment – EHA National

Objective: Create an operational sustainability fund to support EHA National, ensuring effective governance, scholarship and grant allocation, and core member functions such as the annual national conference and maintenance of the professional website.

Budget:

- **Initial Fund Establishment: \$6,000,000 (one-time allocation)**
 - This amount will support the operational activities of EHA, including governance and the delivery of core member services.
- **Annual Operational Support: \$200,000 per year**
 - Once interest is mature, this funding will cover ongoing endowment administrative costs, governance, core EHA functions such as the national conference, professional journal and website maintenance.

Annual Impact: Support the professions peak body to continue in its mission.

Total Cost (4 years): \$6,000,000 (initial fund)

4. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Worker Association - subsidiary of EHA.

Provide a fund and administrative support for the creation and development of a new environmental health association for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers including logistical and administrative costs for meetings and events. To be run as a subsidiary of EHA.

Budget:

- **Initial Fund Establishment: \$10,000,000 (one-time allocation)**
 - This amount will support the operational activities of EHA, including governance and the delivery of core member services.
- **Annual Operational Support: \$300,000 per year**
 - Once interest is mature, this funding will cover ongoing endowment administrative costs, governance, core EHA functions such as the national conference, professional journal and website maintenance.

Annual Impact: Support the professions peak body to continue in its mission.

Table 6. Total Budget Request Over 4 Years*

Endowment	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total (AUD)
Scholarship Endowment (Initial Fund)	16,000,000	0	0	0	16,000,000
Research Endowment (Initial Fund)	30,000,000	0	0	0	30,000,000
Operational Sustainability Endowment (Initial Fund)	6,000,000	0	0	0	6,000,000
	10,000,000				10,000,000
Annual Operational Support					
EHA National - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EHW/EHA sub -	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
	300,000	0	0	0	300,000
Total	53,500,000	0	0	0	53,500,000

***Please note:** figures presented within this budget are estimates only. These estimates have been calculated based on current projections and anticipated costs for the proposed initiatives. Actual expenses may vary depending on several factors, including changes in program scope, inflation, and unforeseen circumstances. The final allocation of funds will be adjusted as necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed activities.

Why EHA? EHA has the expertise to manage and administer scholarship, research and conferencing programs effectively. EHA has a Memorandum of Understanding with enHealth for the management of Commonwealth and State Government funding for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference²¹. As the professional association for EHOs, EHA ensures funding is directed to initiatives that directly benefit the workforce and advance the field of environmental health.

Conclusion

This proposal outlines a sustainable framework for supporting environmental health education, research, and operational activities through the creation of three dedicated endowments. With a total funding request of **\$53.5 million** over four years, the establishment of these endowments will empower Environmental Health Australia (EHA) to continue advancing the environmental health profession, support students, foster research innovation, and maintain operational effectiveness. By investing in these endowments, EHA will ensure the long-term growth and sustainability of the profession, providing a critical foundation for future environmental health leadership.

²¹ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Worker Association (n.d.). *Home*. Retrieved January 23, 2025, from <https://natsieh.com.au/>

Appendix A.

Overview of Environmental and Human Health Productivity Costs

Foodborne Illnesses^{22 23}

Foodborne illnesses present a significant public health challenge in Australia, impacting both individuals and the economy. According to recent studies and submissions:

- **Annual Incidence:** Approximately **4.1 million cases** of foodborne illnesses occur each year.
- **Economic Cost:** The direct and indirect costs associated with foodborne illnesses are estimated at **\$2.4 billion** annually. This includes healthcare expenses, lost productivity, and costs related to food recalls and investigations.

Communicable Diseases²⁴²⁵²⁶²⁷

Communicable diseases encompass a broad range of illnesses, including those transmitted through water and vectors. Key categories include:

Waterborne Diseases

- **Common Pathogens:** Legionella, Cryptosporidium, and E. coli.
- **Annual Incidence:** Estimated at around 50,000 cases.
- **Economic Cost:** Approximately **\$500 million** per year, covering healthcare costs, water treatment, and infrastructure improvements.

Vector-Borne Diseases

- **Primary Diseases:** Dengue Fever, Ross River Virus, Barmah Forest Virus and JEV.
- **Annual Incidence:** Varies seasonally, with recent years reporting up to 3,000 cases annually and cases in new geographic locations due to climate change.

Economic Cost: Estimated at **\$300 million** per year, including healthcare services, vector control programs, and lost productivity.

²² Australian Government Department of Health. (2020). *National Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2018–2021*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au>

²³ Food Standards Australia New Zealand. (2019). *Cost of foodborne illness in Australia: Annual report*. Retrieved from <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au>

²⁴ Australian Water Association. (2020). *Managing waterborne disease risks in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.awa.asn.au>

²⁵ Hrudey, S. E., & Hrudey, E. J. (2004). *Safe drinking water: Lessons from recent outbreaks in affluent nations*. IWA Publishing.

²⁶ Australian Government Department of Health. (2021). *National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au>

²⁷ Queensland Health. (2020). *Economic impact of vector-borne diseases in Queensland*. Retrieved from <https://www.qld.gov.au>

Other Environmental Health Costs²⁸²⁹³⁰³¹³²³³

Air Pollution

- **Health Impact:** Respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.
- **Economic Cost:** Around **\$10 billion** annually, factoring in healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Climate-Related Health Issues

- **Impacts:** Heat-related illnesses, mental health issues due to climate events.
- **Economic Cost:** Estimated at **\$1.5 billion** per year.

Chemical Exposure and Toxic Substances

- **Health Impact:** Chronic diseases, cancers.
- **Economic Cost:** Approximately **\$700 million** annually.

Table 1A. Summary of Total Estimated Annual Costs

Category	Annual Cost (AUD)
Foodborne Illnesses	2.4 billion
Waterborne Communicable Diseases	0.5 billion
Vector-Borne Diseases	0.3 billion
Air Pollution	10 billion
Climate-Related Health Issues	1.5 billion
Chemical Exposure	0.7 billion
Total	15.4 billion

²⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). *The health impacts of air pollution in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au>

²⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020). *Air pollution economic impacts in OECD countries*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org>

³⁰ Climate Council of Australia. (2022). *Health impacts of climate change in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au>

³¹ Australian Academy of Science. (2021). *Climate change and human health: Risks and responses*. Retrieved from <https://www.science.org.au>

³² Safe Work Australia. (2020). *The economic burden of chemical exposure in the workplace*. Retrieved from <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au>

³³ Environmental Working Group. (2019). *Toxic chemicals and public health: Economic impact analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.ewg.org>

Appendix B.

Alignment of Proposals with Australian Government Objectives

1. National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030

Objective: Direct at least **5% of health expenditure to preventive health programs by 2030**, focusing on health protection, disease prevention, and building community resilience³⁴.

How our Proposals Align:

- **Proposal 1 - Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap:**
 - Strengthens the environmental health workforce to prevent diseases caused by unsafe food, water, biosecurity threats, and air quality, directly supporting preventive health initiatives.
 - A **Single Employer Model** ensures consistent coverage and focuses on health protection services in under resourced areas including rural, regional, and remote areas, reducing the burden of preventable diseases.
- **Proposal 4 - EHO Awareness Campaign:**
 - A national literacy campaign educates communities on the importance of preventive measures, reducing reliance on reactive healthcare.
- **Proposal 5 - Scholarships and Endowments:**
 - Builds a pipeline of skilled professionals to address long-term public health challenges, biosecurity threats, and one-health initiatives aligning with the strategy's emphasis on sustainability.

2. National Health and Climate Strategy

Objective: Strengthen health system resilience and address climate-related health risks such as heatwaves, vector-borne diseases, and water security³⁵.

³⁴ Australian Government Department of Health. (2021). *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030*. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030>

³⁵ Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. (2023). National Health and Climate Strategy. <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/national-health-and-climate-strategy.pdf>

How our Proposals Align:

- **Proposal 3 - Investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practitioners:**
 - Targets vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by climate change, addressing health equity and resilience in remote and Indigenous communities.
- **Proposal 5 - Asia Pacific Environmental Health Advocacy and Capacity Building:**
 - Collaborates with Asia Pacific nations to address shared climate-related health risks, such as rising temperatures, vector-borne diseases, and waterborne illnesses.
- **Proposal 1 - Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap:**
 - Equips EHOs to manage climate-related health threats through specialised training and increased workforce capacity, mitigating risks before they escalate.

3. DFAT Pacific Strategy

Objective: Strengthen regional partnerships to support sustainable development, climate adaptation, and improved health outcomes in the Pacific region³⁶.

How our Proposals Align:

- **Proposal 4 - Asia Pacific Environmental Health Advocacy and Capacity Building:**
 - Supports capacity building in environmental health across Asia Pacific nations, ensuring shared learning and stronger regional health systems.
 - Provides training and mentorship programs for Asia Pacific-based EHOs, enhancing regional health security and fostering collaboration.
- **Proposal 5 - Scholarships and Endowments:**
 - Offers targeted scholarships for Asia Pacific practitioners, fostering expertise and leadership in environmental health to tackle regional challenges.

³⁶ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2022). *New international development policy submission*. Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/new-international-development-policy-submission-pacific-islands-forum-secretariat.pdf>

Table 1B. Summary of Alignment

Government Objective	Supporting Proposals	Impact
National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030	Proposal 1 (Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap), Proposal 4 (Awareness Campaign), Proposal 5 (Endowments and Scholarships)	Builds preventive health capacity, reduces disease burden, and ensures sustainability through workforce investment and public education.
National Health and Climate Strategy	Proposal 1 (Workforce and Bridging the Service Gap), Proposal 2 (Reinstating and Strengthening Education Pathways), Proposal 4 (Asia Pacific Environmental Health Advocacy and Institutional Capacity Building)	Addresses climate-related health risks, enhances resilience, and ensures health equity in vulnerable populations. Growing the First Nations environmental health workforce.
DFAT Pacific Strategy	Proposal 4 (Asia Pacific Environmental Health Advocacy and Institutional Capacity Building), Proposal 5 (Endowments and Scholarships)	Builds partnerships with Asia Pacific nations, strengthens regional health security, and supports sustainable development through shared environmental health goals.

Closing Statement

Strengthening Environmental Health for a Healthier Future

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) would like to express our gratitude to the Assistant Treasurer and the Minister for Financial Services for their consideration of this pre-budget 2026/27 submission. As a leading advocate for public health and one-health, EHA stands ready to support the government in enhancing Australia's environmental health workforce and ensuring the long-term sustainability of public health systems.

Now is the time for the Australian Government to invest in the environmental health workforce, strengthening its capacity to protect public health, drive preventive health initiatives, and support communities across Australia and the Asia Pacific region. The proposed projects outlined in this submission have the potential to create lasting, positive impacts on public health outcomes, one-health initiatives, and economic productivity.

EHA looks forward to engaging further with the Australian Government and The Treasury to discuss the potential of these initiatives. We are committed to working together to ensure a healthier, resilient and more productive future for all Australians.



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END