

Interplast Australia & New Zealand
Environment Policy

**Policy Status:
Approved**

Initial CEO Endorsement:	18 June 2019
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Frequency of Review:	2 years
Policy Owner:	Director – International Programs

Revisions to Policy

Significant Changes	Endorsed by CEO	Approved by Interplast Board
Initial creation	27 March 2007	27 March 2007
Minor grammatical, spelling and wording changes. Changed from 'Senior' Program Activities Coordinator to 'designated' Program Activities Coordinator.	9 October 2013	15 October 2013
Grammatical and wording changes, updates to terminology and legislative standards		Annually 2014 -2018
Minor changes to legislative frameworks, and additions to Policy in Practice section – particularly related to programming practices. Realignment of policy structure/format to fit with Policy Implementation Report.	19 May 2019	18 June 2019
Updated to reflect new ACFID Code of Conduct and new template. Separated policy and procedure. Complete review.	13 August 2024	20 August 2024

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Section 1: Purpose

The purpose of the Environment Policy is to outline Interplast Australia & New Zealand's (Interplast's) commitment to ensuring that environmental risks and potential environmental impacts are considered across the organisation. This policy aims to improve Interplast's practices by operating in an environmentally sustainable way in all activities, including international programs, internal operations, fundraising and communications and organisational culture.

Interplast acknowledges that we have contributed to climate change, through our travel, operations and programming (for example, by contributing to medical waste in the countries where we work) and therefore we recognise we have an obligation to demonstrate environmental leadership and take action against climate change. Environmental safeguarding and climate action are essential parts of sustainable development that addresses the disproportionate impact of economic, social and environmental stressors on communities in the Asia Pacific.

Interplast acknowledges the broad scope of the environment and its value to diverse groups of people. The environment plays a key role for communities where we work, with people depending on natural resources for their food, water, shelter and livelihoods. A healthy environment is essential to human health and welfare, and that the impacts of one country affects all. Interplast adopts a moral and ethical obligation to uphold and promote all human rights through its work.

Specifically, this policy seeks to:

- Raise awareness and ensure that all Interplast personnel and observers understand the importance of ensuring sound environmental assessment, risk management and efforts to minimise impact on the environment, and to uphold our joint responsibility to create an environmentally sustainable workplace and international program activity, where everyone is committed to advancing environmentally sound practices.
- Deliver programs that promote environmental sustainability, and minimise environmental impact, in response to local needs and tailored to local context.
- Ensure procedures are in place to systematically record environmental assessments and appropriate risk identification and mitigation related to each project and to identify specific considerations to promote environmental sustainability during planning and implementation.
- Ensure that Interplast adheres to Australian and international legislation and conventions on environmental management and climate action across all spheres of society and international development.

- Demonstrate our commitment to the ACFID Code of Conduct and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Environmental Protection Policy for the Aid Program* (revised 2014 – to be revised in 2025)

Interplast's Environment Policy forms part of Interplast's broader suite of policies and other documents. These are listed in Section 6 of this policy.

Section 2: Scope

The Environment Policy applies to all Interplast personnel and observers accompanying any Interplast activity.

This policy is also applicable to relevant local partners in the countries in which Interplast works and is referenced in all documented partnership agreements. They must also abide by their own relevant policies, international declarations, conventions, agreements and domestic legal frameworks that relate to environmental management and protection.

As an organisation, we are funded by a broad range of donors. We are committed to assessing the environmental impacts of our donors and being transparent about their contribution to climate change. However, as a small organisation, we need to balance this with the financial needs of the organisation.

Section 3: Guiding Principles

Interplast acknowledges that environmental safeguarding is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of all societies, and that those in developing countries are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, particularly in context to the amount of damage that they cause.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- That Interplast must ensure all employees, volunteers, Board Directors and Committee members have an understanding of environmental safeguarding issues and the principles outlined in this policy
- That Interplast has a role to play in promoting environmental safeguarding to key stakeholders and local partners
- That Interplast respects the values and cultures of the people Interplast works with
- That Interplast recognises the close connection between environmental health and the health and wellbeing of those living in Interplast's partner countries – in particular, in small Pacific Island nations
- That while Interplast does not yet specifically work to deliver programs that focus on environmental action, it does have an important role to play both as a good global citizen, as

an active member of the Australian aid sector, and as an organisation who delivers medical care to partner countries, an activity which does create significant medical waste, which is often not able to be appropriately managed.

Section 4: Policy

Interplast acknowledges the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation in many of the countries where we work, including in Australia where Interplast is based. Interplast understands that its work in Australia and overseas can impact on the environment. Consequently, Interplast works with partner organisations, local stakeholders and the Australian public to reduce and, where possible, mitigate the environmental impact of its work, and ensure it has the information required to make informed, environmentally-sustainable choices.

Interplast's objectives in relation to the environment, which are aligned with the standards in the ACFID Code of Conduct, are to:

- comply with all applicable legal and other environmental requirements
- develop an effective system to monitor the environmental impact of Interplast's development work wherever feasible and appropriate
- become a greener organisation
- ensure its in-country programming is implemented with an understanding of the environmental impact and, as much as possible, in an environmentally sustainable way
- support local implementing partners to identify key issues relating to environmental management (as they relate to Interplast programs), and opportunities to address these
- ensure its Australian domestic operations operate in an environmentally sustainable way and reduces its environmental impact; and
- continue to support the development of relationships with suppliers who have environmentally sustainable products and ways of operating.

Interplast recognises that this Environment Policy, and its broader efforts to minimise the impact of Interplast's programs on the environment, is part of its broader suite of policies and processes – intended to protect and safeguard vulnerable people and places.

Interplast can have the most impact on addressing environmental risk and environmental impact in health systems through working closely with partner governments, health institutions and healthcare workers who are engaged with Interplast programs. This engagement goes side by side with Interplast continually reviewing its own procurement and logistical considerations when it comes to delivering international program activities, as well as cross-organisational review of its internal practices more broadly.

In response to these inequities and in line with Sustainable Development Goal 13, *'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'* Interplast is working to embed environmental safeguarding assessments and outcomes within the program life cycle to improve

mainstreaming of practices across all activities. Additionally, Interplast is aiming to work with local partners and new and emerging stakeholders to develop and deliver targeted activities to address environmental impact in the health sector, particularly around medical waste.

Section 5: Summary of Environmental Practises

Interplast has a range of practices in place across the organisation and embedded into its international programming which promote environmental safeguarding.

These relate to:

- Organisational culture and practice (including employee and volunteer training)
- International program activity procedures.
- Other events and activities (such as events for fundraising and supporter engagement).

This section provides a summary of Interplast's practices on these areas.

5.1: Organisational culture and practise

1. Interplast commits to strong governance and organisational leadership, with Board meetings to include routine discussions on climate change action, including how this policy interacts with other policies.
2. Interplast continually reviews its operational practices to identify and address areas where more sustainable practices can be introduced and implemented.

This may include:

- a) Recycling waste wherever possible – paper, cardboard, packing materials etc
 - b) Continual improvement and strengthening of Interplast's online systems and software to reduce the need for paper-based filing, printing and other waste-producing activity, seeking to become a paper free office
 - c) Reduce the emissions of our workspace and online systems through simple changes:
 - i) Sending less emails (for example, avoiding sending one-word replies)
 - ii) Sending links to documents, rather than attaching them
 - iii) Unsubscribing from newsletters that are not read
 - iv) Turning off second screens when having online calls.
3. Interplast works within the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS) building, which creates challenges for us to monitor and control our own office space carbon emissions. However, we will advocate for RACS carbon emissions to be monitored.
 4. All personnel are required to confirm their commitment to this policy as part of their induction process.
 5. All employees are required to undertake ACFID's Introduction to Climate Change & Development module within their probation period (and existing employees are being required to complete this in 2024).
 6. All volunteers are required to complete a section on environmental safeguarding as it relates to Interplast programs and their volunteer role, as part of their volunteer induction training.

7. Interplast has an “Environmental Focal Point” which sits within the International Programs team, and has responsibility for monitoring sector practice, emerging trends and opportunities as well as overseeing policy review & development.
8. Interplast’s Environmental Focal Point delivers periodic training sessions to the whole employee group focused on climate action and how this relates to Interplast’s work, to the organisation as a whole, and to people’s specific roles.

5.2: International program activities

1. All Interplast international programs will be screened for their potential environmental impact using an updated risk assessment tool. Interplast is committed to assessing and managing climate risks in programs (e.g., identifying, minimising and reporting on climate risks and impacts that affect our programming). Furthermore, Interplast is committed to assessing and managing climate impacts of our programs (e.g., the direct and indirect impacts that our programs have on climate change).
2. Interplast ensures volunteers understand Interplast’s commitment and requirements relating to environmental safeguarding, as relevant to their role in delivering Interplast programs overseas.
3. Where possible, Interplast makes decisions relating to the procurement and use of medical equipment and supplies which have a reduced environmental impact, while also considering Value for Money Principles.
4. Where practical and possible, Interplast makes decisions regarding program logistics (travel, accommodation etc) which minimise environmental impacts and support suppliers who are investing in environmental sustainability. We recognise that when visiting partner countries, there is often less choice. However, at a minimum, we will assess all risks to ensure that we can minimise impacts where possible.
5. Interplast has an increased focus on utilising technology to deliver remote and online support across a range of program areas, reducing the need for overseas travel when activities can be delivered through other means. This may also include supporting in-country partners to deliver activities locally.
6. Interplast commits to not taking on things that are not needed by our partner countries.
7. Interplast will raise awareness and advocate to our partners, for addressing climate risk and climate impact related to its programs.
8. Incorporate environmental and climate considerations into periodic assessments of our partners’ capacity.

5.3: Fundraising and supporter engagement events

1. All activities supported by Interplast (including those involving fundraising and communications with the Australian public) will be initially screened for their environmental impact. Projects that are assessed to have significant negative environmental impacts will not be supported by Interplast.
2. Interplast will also seek to develop relationships with suppliers which share its environmental values and approach to becoming environmentally sustainable.
3. Interplast will consider environmental impact when assessing new donor partnerships, in line with its Ethical Fundraising Policy.

Section 6: Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy will be monitored and reviewed at intervals as indicated in this policy and following the process outlined in Interplast's Policy Framework.

The Chief Executive Officer is ultimately accountable to the Board for managing and maintaining this policy and is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The Board is responsible for adopting this policy.

The Director – International Programs is accountable to the Chief Executive Officer for ensuring the currency of this policy and all supporting procedures and relevant manuals and has responsibility for operationalising the policy.

Where compliance issues are identified, they will be addressed promptly. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for taking any recommended amendments to this policy to the Interplast Board for its approval.

Section 7: Related Documents and Legislation

In alignment with the ACFID Code of Conduct, Interplast is committed to addressing the effect of environmental impact as being fundamental to the attainment of human rights (Section 3.3 of the Code – Promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability).

The compliance indicators for Section 3.3 of the Code are that members have a:

- Policy, statement or guidance document committing the member to promoting environmental sustainability, climate action and improved environmental outcomes in development and humanitarian initiative and minimising the environmental impact, including the carbon footprint, of their organisation's internal operations (this document).
- Design or planning framework, tools, templates which require or approaches which consistently show evidence of the analysis of environmental risk and management, including

risks associated with climate change and context and stakeholder analysis. Contextual analysis should consider the impacts of climate change.

- A risk framework, risk management plan or approach that assesses and addresses risks for all initiatives including risks associated with climate change.

Interplast is committed to upholding these compliance indicators and is working to achieve most of the good practice indicators. The good practice indicators for the Code are:

- A focal person with responsibility for environmental sustainability is in place.
- Climate change mitigation, adaptation, and impact, and disaster risk reduction are incorporated into program strategies wherever possible
- Program designs, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes include consideration of potential and realised impacts on the environment
- Environmental sustainability and impact training is provided to key personnel and partners
- Information about the impacts of climate change and environmental sustainability issues are promoted in public communications
- Climate action policy, programs and advocacy reflect climate justice and equity principles
- Organisational targets are in place to measure progress in minimising the environmental impact of our operations
- Periodic reports are provided internally and to relevant external stakeholders on environmental sustainability and impact achievements
- Member annual report includes Environmental sustainability reporting, including reporting on actions to reduce organisational carbon footprint.

Interplast’s activities are aligned with the Australian Government’s main legislative framework for the environment, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The Australian Government’s Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities administers the EPBC Act. In addition, this policy, and Interplast’s activities, align to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Environmental Protection Policy as well as all partner country laws, standards and/or policies relating to the environment.

Interplast also recognises to Australian legislation and international conventions and frameworks which are relevant to Interplast’s work and are listed in the following table.

Name of document/legislation	Location/hyperlink
ACFID Code of Conduct (2019)	https://acfid.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ACFID_Code_Dec-2019_published_high-res_0.pdf
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris 2015)	https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

ACFID Quality Assurance Framework	https://acfid.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/QAF_Dec19_published_large-2.pdf
Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse emissions (Bali 2007)	https://unfccc.int/documents/2409
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (New York, 1992)	https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf
Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal	https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8385/-Basel%20Convention%20on%20the%20Control%20of%20Transboundary%20Movements%20of%20Hazardous%20Wastes%20-20113644.pdf?sequence=2&amp%3BisAllowed=
Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change	https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/PIFACC-ref.pdf

Section 8: Definitions

Word / Phrase	Definition
Personnel	<p>Personnel includes all employees, consultants, volunteers, Board Directors, Committee members, Working Group members and Ambassadors that are engaged by Interplast to perform the work of Interplast.</p> <p>Volunteers include both professional (e.g. administrative roles) and medical volunteers (e.g. surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses or allied therapists), students, interns, or any other person who has entered into a volunteer arrangement or agreement with Interplast.</p>
Observer	<p>Observers are individuals accompanying an Interplast program, delivered by volunteers in a partner country (e.g. representing a donor organisation or students on an observational placement). Observers do not have a clinical role but may assist the clinical team by completing tasks related to program delivery.</p>

Partner	Partner includes organisations that work with Interplast to implement a joint project with mutually agreed outcomes, and/or with whom Interplast has a signed partnership agreement and/or memorandum of understanding. Partner organisations may or may not be recipients of funds through Interplast.
Beneficiary	Beneficiary 1) a patient receiving treatment through an Interplast activity (this may include a consult only, surgery, allied health treatment or other clinical care, and could be provided by an Interplast volunteer, or a local partner clinician during an Interplast activity), or 2) local partner personnel participating in training delivered by Interplast.
Stakeholder	Stakeholders include all personnel, observers, partners, beneficiaries and supporters, community members in the country where we work, funders, international development peers and organisations, or any other individuals or organisations that connect with Interplast.
The environment	The environment, as cited in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 and reaffirmed in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Environmental and Social Safeguard policy: Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities Climate and natural systems and processes Natural and physical resources Qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas Heritage values of places, and Social, economic and cultural aspects of the above, including those related to indigenous peoples.
Environmental impact	An impact is defined as any direct or indirect activity which has a positive or negative effect on the environment. A significant negative impact is any activity which has potential to disrupt ecosystems or that is large scale or of a permanent or long-term nature.
Climate change	Climate change is a long-term change in the earth's climate and weather patterns. Climate Change and global warming are terms often used interchangeably to describe the accelerated increase in the Earth's global average

	temperature as a result of human activity. Climate change affects how people interact with the environment.
Environmental mitigation	An environmental mitigation plan is a series of sub-activities that are implemented within the major activity to minimise the impact on the environment. These should include the phases of planning and design, implementation and completion for each activity.
Adaptation	Adaptation means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause, or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise.
Mitigation	Mitigation means making the impacts of climate change less severe by preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere.