Western Health anaesthetist Forbes McGain switched gases.

VIC News

Western Health doctors use greener gas for general anaesthetics to reduce carbon emissions

Lucie van den Berg, Herald Sun

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NOT content just to save lives, doctors at a Melbourne hospital have found a way to put patients "to sleep" in a way that is environmentally greener and financially leaner.

Anaesthetists at Western Health have changed the gases they use in operations to reduce their carbon emissions.

Anaesthetist and intensive care physician Forbes McGain said they had saved $30,000 a year and reduced emissions by 140 tonnes, which is the equivalent of 36 return flights from

Melbourne to London.

"Two gases commonly used by anaesthetists, desflurane and nitrous oxide, have larger global warming potential than other gases," Dr McGain said.

Replacing them with sevoflurane and propofol was possible in most surgeries and had no impact on patients, he said.

"We can all make changes to reduce our carbon emissions but for most people, by far the greatest output they have is in their workplace," he said.

If the Victorian health system changed the gas they used, Dr McGain said the savings could be up to $1 million a year with a big reduction in emissions.

A study found that the Victorian health system spent almost $6 million a year on anaesthetic gases.