

Climate Health WA Inquiry

About your submission

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group?

☒ No

☐ Yes

If yes, please identify the organisation:

Your contact details

The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.

First name

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Surname

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Address

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Phone

[REDACTED]

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Publication of submissions

Submissions will be published with the name of the submitter unless otherwise indicated below. Do you consent to be identified in the published submission?

☐ Yes, I / my organisation agree to be identified

☒ No, I / my organisation request to remain anonymous

Terms of Reference

You are encouraged to address at least ONE of the Terms of Reference as listed below. Please select which item/s you will address:

☒ 1. Establish current knowledge on the implications of climate change for health in Western Australia (WA) and recommend a framework for evaluating future implications.

☐ 2. Identify and recommend a program of work to manage the implications of climate change for health in WA, which will protect the public from the harmful health impacts of climate change.

☒ 3. Identify and recommend a program of work to manage the implications of climate change for health in WA, which will strengthen the preparedness and resilience of communities and health services against extreme weather events, with a focus on the most vulnerable in the community.

- ☒ 4. Identify and recommend a program of work to manage the implications of climate change for health in WA, which will reduce the contribution of WA health services to climate change and other detrimental impacts.
- ☐ 5. Identify and recommend a program of work to manage the implications of climate change for health in WA, which will enable WA Health services to implement change, including energy efficiency, to a more sustainable model.
- ☒ 6. Evaluate the likely benefits (health and wellbeing, social and economic) arising from climate change mitigation strategies, with a focus on WA health services.
- ☒ 7. Define the role of the Department of Health in leading public policy on climate change and health.
- ☐ 8. Recommend the Terms of Reference, scope and preferred methods for undertaking a climate change vulnerability assessment for the health sector.
- ☐ 9. Recommend the Terms of Reference, scope and preferred methods for developing a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the health sector.

Submissions response field

Please type your response to the item(s) selected above into the field below. Alternatively you may provide your submission as a separate attachment (suggested maximum 5 pages).

We know that Human health is dependent on the health of the planet and its ecosystems.

Climate change has the potential to undermine all the social and ecological determinants of health; it is considered to be the biggest health threat in the 21st century.

Climate change has direct and indirect effects on human health. This includes:

- direct effects through injury, physical illness and mental health impacts of heat waves, extreme temperatures; through increased air pollution related respiratory diseases; through increased water and food borne disease, through increased vector and rodent based disease, and through impacts of altered and strained food, water, and nutritional illness.
- indirect effects related to concerns of biodiversity loss, via increased stress and alteration of on land and water based agriculture systems (food and water security), through water and food loss and insecurity, as well as altered habitable land causing altered population demographic migration - this will also increase pressures on services and infrastructure in urban locations, there will be alteration and changes with increased pressures on sanitation effects, pressures on health / government and housing, and increased demand on emergency services and health services.

Climate change will have wide spread impacts. Many of the effects of climate change are already being felt, and the frequency and intensity of their impacts will increase with time.

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The intensity of impacts varying based on the particular vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity of individuals and populations. We know that the most vulnerable groups in our society will be at high risk. This include First Nations people, people of colour and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people from lower socioeconomic class (poverty, homeless, low income), the elderly, women and children, and those in already isolated or marginalised communities. WA is no different to the rest of the world in this.

Given the particular situation in WA - we are especially vulnerable to:

- further declines in rainfall patterns (already dropping for the last 40 years) putting significant stress on the south west area of WA
- rising sea levels posing significant risk to coastal infrastructure and population
- Further loss of critically threatened bushland and flora and fauna - decreasing genetic diversity and risking public health through this
- Loss of agribusiness and risk to mental and physical health of farming and related populations

Further - Given the particular geographic and socio-economic statistics of the WA population, and with many people in rural and remote areas, this could present as more of a challenge in WA.

Tackling this issue is 'greater than health' and it requires a whole of system approach. BUT - Health has a responsibility to current and future populations to be honest, clear, and direct in the needs of urgent action in both mitigation and adaptation strategies.

WA health needs to:

1. Protect, prepare and support communities from current and future impacts
 - WA health needs to secure resources and time to perform / collate / prepare detailed research of the entirety of the situation.
 - WA health needs to prioritise appropriate resources to help coordinate responses
 - WA health needs clear and directive policy development across governmental departments to set and meet strict emission regulations
 - Strongly consider the initiation / set up of a Sustainable Development Unit – across government departments and 'beyond government' departments. Key areas of scope include research, review, regulation, and policy development in the area of Climate Change.
 - We need to advertise, educate, and advocate around and for climate change risk, mitigation, and adaptation based on clear and accurate evidence and best practice (in line with international guidelines and standards).

2. What can we do 'in house' in the WA Health?

- We must increase awareness of the issue - both to health professionals and the public through strong public health campaigns in this area
- We need clear and 'enforceable' regulation in health sector sustainability - with

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government directive / incentive and support in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to renewable energy, improving water efficiency, and drastically decreasing waste in hospitals and health services.

- We must undergo divestment, and refuse sponsorship from fossil fuel companies.
- We must establish KPI and Benchmarks with in the Health Service, aligned under CLINAL EXCELLENCE and recorded with in Health Service Report Cards.
- Frameworks under which this may be possible include:
 - o 'Global Green Healthy Hospital' 10 goal Framework
 - o 'National Well-being' models such as that initiated in NZ

3. Policy and Advocacy?

- Climate change IS a health issue. And Health needs to take a proactive and lead role in the discussions around climate change. This is in regards to both with in Health service changes, but also in and around mitigation and adaptation efforts across industry and government departments.
- Just as with other 'public health issues' - The Medical profession has a clear role in regulating industry and needs to be involved in setting emissions targets / regulating emitting industries (e.g.: just as was done with Asbestos, Tobacco, etc).
- We must follow international standard and suggestion from reputable research bodies (e.g: Lancet, WHO, UN, IPCC) in regards emission targets, renewable energy, re-forestation, and also diet and nutritional suggestions for environmental sustainability (e.g.: LANCET eat Report).
- We must push forward with requirements and targets aligned with commitments under the Paris Agreement and those of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

- Other:

- o Western Australia has significant potential for expanding renewable energy generation. Health needs to be active in promoting prompt transition to renewables. WA government needs to actively support workers and industry as this transition occurs.
- o WA needs to act swiftly to reduce emissions from transport. We need increased public transport options (rail, bus), and improved bike and pedestrian networks.
- o WA needs to preserve and promote a shift in agricultural practice – pushing for transition to regenerative agricultural practice, initiating indigenous agricultural practice, and regulating toward a shift away from unsustainable agricultural practice and high levels of meat production
- o WA needs to promote a shift to a plant based diet (as per LANCET Eat suggestions).
- o WA needs to review urban development policy. With a DRASTIC shift away from current urban infill design toward 'urban bushland' protection with increased urban canopy and urban regeneration. Alternative urban design should be reviewed.
- o We need CLEAR regulation around halting of land clearing, especially of remaining / remnant bush land and forest. Efforts must be directed toward the preservation of remaining bush / forest and reforestation of previously cleared areas

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to prevent further land degradation and improve carbon sequestration.

As a health service we should be willing to initiate across health service policy around:

- o Increased resource and leadership in sustainability and environment supporting staff and departments in this
- o Allow imaginative problem solving
- o Move toward Renewable energy in health services
- o Sustainable procurement and divest from fossil fuel industry + decline sponsorship from fossil fuel companies
- o Improve and prioritise Education of staff and patients
- o Shift toward 'Lancet Eat' guidelines for in hospital Diets
- o Improve waste management in health services

Please complete this sheet and submit with any attachments to: Climate Health WA Inquiry