

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.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	Chris
Surname	Curry
Address	██████████
Phone	██████████
Email	██████████████████

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).

Introduction

It is now established and unequivocal that world climate is changing rapidly and that human activity is causing it.

At a global level climate change is going to have most significant impacts on human health through increases of the following:

- heat extremes
- droughts
- extreme weather events – heat waves, extreme cold events, storms, floods, fires
- rising sea levels

The consequences will include:

- food insecurity
- local disasters
- coastal erosion and flooding

Human health impacts will include:

- heat illnesses
- malnutrition and starvation
- deaths, disability, health impacts from disasters
- mental illnesses
- changing distributions of infectious diseases

For Western Australia, climate change is going to have most significant impacts on human health through:

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- heat extremes
- contraction of the wheatbelt and negative impacts on agriculture (eg, viticulture)
- extreme weather events
- fires

Consequences will include increases in:

- heat illnesses
- poor nutrition
- the health impacts of disasters
- mental illnesses
- uncertainty about distributions of infectious diseases

Responses to Terms of Reference items

1. 1.1. Establish current knowledge on the implications of climate change for health in Western Australia (WA) and

1.2. recommend a framework for evaluating future implications

1.1. – As above:

Consequences will include increases in:

- heat illnesses
- poor nutrition
- the health impacts of disasters
- mental illnesses
- uncertainty about distributions of infectious diseases

1.2. Increase documentation and surveillance of these conditions

2. Identify and recommend a program of work to

2.1. manage the implications of climate change for health in WA:

2.2. protect the public from the harmful health impacts of climate change:

2.1. The State Government must do more to mitigate climate change. It must accelerate a transition away from the burning of fossil fuels, in the energy sector and in the transport sector.

The State Government must do more to adapt to climate change. It must legislate for greater energy efficiency in building construction and for the use of solar panels on all new buildings.

2.2. The State Government must promote measures to protect buildings from heat, through use of trees, vegetation, shade and insulation.

3. Identify and recommend a program of work to manage the implications of climate

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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

The implications of climate change require an all-of-government response, as in 2.1 and 2.2 above.

With respect to extreme weather events, specific works need to include attention to the following:

- heat impacts - all communities
- storm impacts – all communities
- coastal erosion and flooding – at risk coastal and estuary communities
- fire – at risk semi-rural, rural and forest communities

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

WA health services are large consumers of fossil fuels, for electricity and for transport. WA health services need to embark on a program of work to:

1. install solar panels on buildings to reduce use of fossil fuel generated electricity
2. transition all vehicles to electric power or non-fossil fuel

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

As for 4. above:

The State Government needs to legislate so that government services are required to

1. install solar panels on buildings to reduce use of fossil fuel generated electricity
2. transition all vehicles to electric power or non-fossil fuel

6. Evaluate the likely benefits (health and wellbeing, social and economic) arising from climate change mitigation strategies, with a focus on WA health services

For direct health impacts, monitor workload and case-mix in emergency departments and in mental health services.

Submissions response field

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Submitted by

Chris Curry

Emeritus Consultant, Fiona Stanley Hospital
Clinical Associate Professor, Emergency Medicine, University of WA (retired)
Environmental Science student, Murdoch University

[Redacted]

Tel

Mobile

Email

Date 29 August 2019

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