

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.

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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).

Food System vulnerability does not appear to be prioritised in health agenda's even though there is significant global evidence as to the impending impacts of climate change. There is documentation within government departments that talk generally to actions yet there is a lack of cohesiveness in government departments in acting on these. The Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals are global commitments by the Australian Government yet their priorities are not obvious nor is the monitoring of actions at a local level, presenting a disconnect in system intent and deliverables. It is uncertain whether this is due to lack of strong leadership, limitations associated with governmental political cycles, fear of unintended consequences as a result of modelling of actions or decisions, to combat climate change, delaying the ability for timely and necessary action or Australian Culture, "she'll be right" attitude, placing the responsibility on "someone else's" agenda.

The Department of Health (WA) has undertaken extensive screening which has highlighted the impacts of a rise in temperature, including a loss or shift of food production zones, particularly in the South West. In addition, an increase in droughts, heatwaves, fires, cyclones, floods and an increasing sea level. The effects of these impacts on health will be seen more acutely in existing vulnerable populations. A long term vision by government is yet to be demonstrated in the Australian context.

The food system effects relate to a change in foods grown and the availability of fresh food consumption which will likely include an increase in cost of fresh food.

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This dietary shift will see significant health impacts to the population. To circumvent potential implications DoH need to develop practical actions for the short, medium and long term that prioritise local food systems. These will need to clearly prescribe actions for the individual, community and system to ensure a cohesive approach.

Potential for adaptation is an important consideration but it is probable that these changes will initiate unforeseen negative outcomes or unintentional consequences. Regardless the planetary and economic boundaries that we are currently overstepping requires, what will sometimes be seen as, unpopular change. This is where government will need to demonstrate the strongest level of leadership and confidence to build a new system that will support the health of the people and the planet going forward. The actions will include, greenhouse gas emissions, water, soil and local food security management strategies across the natural, built and social cultural environments.

A multi-sectorial approach is critical to food system transformation, this can be supported by a mechanism that improves institutional arrangements and frameworks across agriculture, environment, finance, health, education, etc.. Well known groups such as Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) have well established and evidenced based position statements that have calls for actions for government under a variety of position statements in response to climate change. These represent general principles that will form the basis of an adaptive system, however, these need to be extended so drivers and actions within the food system have clear direction for action. For example, food production supported by agroecological approaches such as regenerative farming. Local government need to facilitate the opportunity for farmers to transition to this farming method by supporting farmers in the "how to" in a contextualised way for their region. In addition, building on activities and providing opportunity to activate the local food community as a mechanism to support local food security including access to fresh food, reduce GHG and retain rural and remote populations.

Commercial determinants of health are now seen a significant driver of food choice and policies that protect consumers from the subtlety of "big food" propaganda are a critical to improve health in the short and long term. A focus on the food environment as a driver for consumption requires particular attention. Policy reducing density of quick service restaurants and providing land use opportunity to grow urban food and increase local food access to fresh food will go some way to nurture more sustainable consumer food choices and prepare for impacts of climate change.

In April, 2020 an International Congress has been convened by the World Public Health Nutrition Organisation. This Congress is a midpoint for the UN Decade of Action for Nutrition and plans to assess the activities to date and those required to meet the agenda of a sustainable food system. An initiative as part of this event,

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are plans to coordinate a ministerial event where representatives from United Nations (UN), Food and Agricultural Authority (FAO) and other key stakeholders who can present working solutions, from other countries, to Australian ministers and senior bureaucrats to give them the “confidence” to demonstrate strong leadership to embed the required actions in policy.

As part of governments demonstrating leadership there needs to be a common narrative and approach interdepartmentally. This way there would be clear intent of policies and would support alignment across portfolio’s and departments.

Recommendations:

- **Work with relevant departments** such as Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development, Department of Planning, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, **to develop greenhouse gas emissions, water, soil and local food security management strategies across the natural, built and social cultural environments.**
- Clearly prescribe actions for the individual, community and system to ensure a cohesive approach to prioritising local food systems.
- Activate the local food community as a mechanism to support local food security including access to fresh food.
- Support the Department of Planning to improve the State Planning Framework to reduce the density of quick service restaurants and provide land use opportunity to grow urban food and increase local food access to fresh food.

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