



Submission to Climate Health WA Inquiry

By email climatehealthwa@health.wa.gov.au

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Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We wish to make the following points to the inquiry:

- 1) We strongly support and commend this inquiry given the significant impacts on health that will occur and are already occurring as a result of climate change in Western Australia.
- 2) As general context, we submit that we are in a climate emergency, and Western Australia's carbon pollution is out of control. Today, data released from the Australian Government shows that LNG pollution from Western Australia is driving up Australia's emissions, in breach of the Paris Agreement. Pollution from WA LNG is cancelling out the savings being made by all installed renewable energy capacity across the entire country and causing Western Australia to be the only state with rising pollution.
- 3) We submit that the WA Department of Health (ideally through this inquiry or else by another means) must urgently commission and release a thorough public investigation of the impacts of climate change on public health in Western Australia, including the impacts on the WA health care system. This investigation should examine various likely scenarios as a result of different temperature ranges that could result from global carbon pollution trajectories. i.e. 1.5, 2, 3, 4degrees warming and above. Each scenario will have different impacts and implications and this information is of critical importance to Western Australians and the healthy functioning of our democracy in a manner that can deliver evidence based policy solution so the issue. The sooner this information is available in the public domain, the better policy solutions and responses will be possible and the more prepared the health system and Western Australian community will be for these impacts. The longer this information is delayed, the greater the health costs and impacts will be.
- 4) We submit that the Public Health Assessment powers under the Health Act should be brought into effect as soon as possible, and formal public health impact assessment should be undertaken for all new and existing projects and proposals that would continue, or significantly increase carbon pollution here in Western Australia. We note that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) undertakes assessment of the environmental impacts of such projects, and receives the advice of the Department of Health as part of this process, however the scope and focus of these assessments is not on public health implications and additional assessment of public health impacts is necessary and justified given the significant impacts that will result in this area.

Such assessments must include all proposed fossil fuel developments including gas fracking, LNG and coal developments. The impacts of these developments on health including water pollution, air pollution, mental health, and climate change must be assessed as part of such Health Impact Assessments.

- 5) We submit that the WA LNG industry, should bear a share of responsibility for the impacts of climate change on public health in Western Australia that is proportionate to the size and scale of the pollution caused by this sector and the temperature rise that their activities are likely to deliver. In particular, Chevron and Woodside, which are together responsible for roughly one third of WA greenhouse gas emissions from all sources should bear a proportionate allocation of the considerable costs of climate change impacts on health, and the response necessary by the public health system projected into the future. We note that these companies pay little to no tax in Australia and pay no royalties for the polluting gas they export.

While the IPCC says that global gas use must decline significantly to prevent global warming from exceeding the 1.5 degrees threshold, these companies are continuing to expand gas production, and have recently seen Australia overtake Qatar as the world's largest LNG exporter. The proposed Browse Basin / Burrup hub proposed by Woodside would see WA gas exports continue to 2070 – well beyond the net zero emissions goal established under the Paris Agreement. Through their activities, these companies have chosen to support and deliver a global temperature rise of well over 3 degrees and possibly much greater. These companies should be required to bear the cost of dealing with the health impacts of the future that they are responsible for creating.

- 6) In order to facilitate this, we submit that a WA Climate Health Levy should be introduced on WA's largest polluters to cover the costs of responding to climate change impacts on public health in Western Australia.
- 7) Finally, we note that the WA Health Care system is a significant source of carbon pollution due to energy use and waste generation. We submit that the Department and associated entities must undertake a program to decarbonise the health care system in line with the need to reduce carbon pollution as fast and as far as possible. This should be undertaken according to the 'mitigation hierarchy' starting with avoidance of pollution through energy efficiency, purchasing of renewable energy, and systematically removing gas as a fuel source. We note that such actions may be done in a way that is cost neutral or cost positive in the medium term through reductions in energy use and investments in low cost renewable energy solutions.

Thank you for considering this submission