



Department of  
**Primary Industries and  
Regional Development**

Our reference: 900/18  
Enquiries: Nancye Gannaway

Adj. Professor Tarun Weeramanthri  
Climate Health WA Inquiry  
Department of Health  
[climatehealthwa@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:climatehealthwa@health.wa.gov.au)

Dear Professor Weeramanthri

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Climate Health WA Inquiry.

The climate changes forecast in the late 1980's are occurring faster than projected. Western Australia has already experienced a decline in annual rainfall in the South West Land division, increased variability in rainfall throughout the state and on average increases in daily temperatures.

To date improvements in farming technologies, decision-making support, agronomy and cultivars are increasing the rainfall use efficiency of broadacre crops at a rate greater than the observed rainfall decline associated with climate change. These improvements along with other changes has resulted in reduced demand for labour, and other services by farm businesses which have had consequences for the viability of communities and the health services that support them.

These changes are understood to be directly and indirectly impacting on the health of Western Australian's in a number of different ways including but not restricted to increased stress (distress) and rates of physical illness.

The challenge for Government is to manage the impacts of the projected increased occurrence of temporally acute climate events (e.g., bushfire, cyclones) alongside the less readily discernible impacts of slow onset, spatially diffuse events (drought, global warming) where expression in health services may be delayed or masked by other issues.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is responsible for considerable investment into the provision of information and services to the rural communities and businesses of Western Australia that directly or indirectly promote community adaptation to the consequences of climate change.

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This work includes funding social services (Regional Men's Health Initiative, Rural Financial Counselling Service, Community Resource Centres etc.), the facilitation of assistance to disaster affected primary producers, (Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements), the provision of climate information, business decision-making tools and the development of new agronomic packages.

Those services DPIRD provides that help to add value to and/ or align with health services as a means of improving health outcomes for rural Western Australians are:

- Regularly convening groups to manage negative climate events (drought, cyclone and bushfire) to ensure that appropriate support is available to primary producers and their families. This work includes providing coverage of animal welfare issues, water supply for human consumption and agricultural activities as promoting (and referring to) social and health services in target areas.
- Leading state policy development under the National Drought Agreement. This work includes the appropriate research and the design of interventions to support drought affected industries and communities and is analogous to the purpose of this inquiry.
- Evaluates outcomes of DPIRD led interventions, which can be shared with the Department of Health, such as Regional Men's Health Initiative and the Pilot of Drought Reform, as well as an array of climate and agricultural industry data sets that may be useful to this inquiry.
- Hosting a Senior Officers Group, Social Support, Intergovernmental Agreement National Drought Program Reform with representatives from the Mental Health Commission, the Western Australian Country Health Service, the Department of Communities and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

This group's shares intelligence on seasonal impacts, the availability of services and has supported community consultation to assess the impacts of a dry season in 2017.

This group's most significant challenge has been to establish an understanding of the impacts of drought on the health of rural Western Australian's and the associated demand for social and health services.

- The Collaborative for Healthcare Analysis and Statistical Modelling (CHASM), University of Western Australia has been commissioned by DPIRD and the Senior Officers Group to undertake initial research using the Health Linked Data sets and climate (rainfall) and other data. It is hoped that this study will demonstrate what information is available and what is needed to understand the impacts of drought on the health of West Australians.

This initial study will be available to the Department of Health by the end of October 2019 and prior to the completion of the Climate Health WA Inquiry.

DPIRD notes that there are also number of interdepartmental groups, convening to manage acute climate disaster events as they arise. These groups are efficiently mobilising support to communities affected by the events.

The Department of Health should consider convening a similar group for climate change, to share intelligence, support research, service development and promote appropriate interventions that help promote adaptation to the consequences of climate change. Participation in this group should include those Departments whose responsibilities promote the long-term development of communities, infrastructure and other services.

In an ongoing way DPIRD will support the Department of Health by providing reporting on climate observations and modelling; regional economic and social trends and intelligence on adverse seasons or climate events as required.

Please find attached a list of publications and contacts that this inquiry may find useful and relevant.

Yours sincerely



**RALPH ADDIS**  
**DIRECTOR GENERAL**

26/8/2019

Att 1: List of publications and contacts available



## Attachment 1.

Please note that there are many services, reports and projects analogous to and aligned to the Climate WA Health Inquiry. This is intended to be a sample and a guide to inform the Inquiry of the breadth of resource and information available.

### DPIRD Contacts

Ian Foster, Meteorologist, [REDACTED] 08 9368 3954

Bruce Mullan, Chair, Senior Officers Group Social Support Intergovernmental Agreement National Drought Program Reform, [REDACTED] 08 9368 3578

Nancye Gannaway, Executive Officer, Senior Officers Group Social Support Intergovernmental Agreement National Drought Program Reform; Pilot of Drought Reform Measures, Regional Men's Health Initiative; Rural Financial Counselling Services  
[REDACTED]

### Publications

Rob Sudmeyer, Alexandra Edward, Vic Fazakerley, Leigh Simpkin and Ian Foster (2016) Bulletin 4870 Climate change: impacts and adaptation for agriculture in Western Australia (PDF 4.9MB).

Link:// <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-change/climate-trends-western-australia>

Dry Season Information Resources - <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-weather/dry-season-resources>

Western Australia's rural health, financial & information services support directory  
<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-land-water/western-australia%E2%80%99s-rural-health-financial-information-services-support-directory>

Bree Smolinski (2015) The evolution of drought policy in Western Australia.  
<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/drought-and-dry-seasons/evolution-drought-policy-western-australia>

Ross Kingwell, Lucy Anderton, Nazrul Islam, Vilaphonh Xayavong, Angela Wardell-Johnson, David Feldman and Jane Speijers (2013) Broadacre farmers adapting to a changing climate.  
[https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached\\_files\\_publications/Kingwell\\_2013\\_Broadacre\\_farmers\\_adapting.pdf](https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached_files_publications/Kingwell_2013_Broadacre_farmers_adapting.pdf)

Department of Primary Industries Regional Development (2017) 2017 Season Consultation  
<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/Season%202017%20Community%20Consultation%20Report.pdf>

### Relevant Projects and Programs

(Funded by DPIRD, including Royalties for Regions, or Implemented by DPIRD)

#### *Regional Men's Health Initiative*

Contact: Mr Owen Catto; [REDACTED]  
<https://regionalmenshealth.org.au/>

Note: This project is Royalties for Regions funded and has undergone several third party external reviews which are available for consideration.

#### *Rural Financial Counselling Service Western Australia*

Contact: Mr Chris Wheatcroft [REDACTED]

Note: This program is a service available to Primary Producers and is funded in partnership by the State and Commonwealth Governments.

<https://rfcswa.com.au/>

*Pilot of Drought Program Reform 2010-2012*

The Australian Government, in partnership with the State Government, conducted a pilot of drought reform measures in parts of Western Australia. The pilot tested a package of new measures developed in response to the national review of drought policy. The measures were designed to move from a crisis management approach to risk management. The aim was to better support farmers, their families and rural communities in preparing for future challenges, rather than waiting until they are in crisis to offer assistance