



Climate Health WA Inquiry

Inquiry into the impacts of climate change on health in Western Australia

Inquiry Lead:
Dr Tarun Weeramanthri

Witnesses:

Mr Joe Boyle
Chief Executive, PathWest

Dr Dustin Hall
Haematologist, PathWest

Thursday, 12 December 2019

[10:00:05]

HEARING COMMENCED

5 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: I would like to thank you both for your
interest in the Inquiry and for your appearance at today's hearing. The purpose
of this hearing is to assist me in gathering evidence for the Climate Health WA
10 Inquiry into the impacts of climate change on health in Western Australia. My
name is Tarun Weeramanthri and I have been appointed by the Chief Health
Officer to undertake the Inquiry. Beside me is Dr Sarah Joyce, the Inquiry's
Project Director. If everyone could please be aware that the use of mobile
phones and other recording devices is not permitted in this room, so please
make sure that your phone is on silent or switched off.

15 This hearing is a formal procedure convened under section 231 of the *Public
Health Act 2016*. While you are not being asked to give your evidence under
oath or affirmation, it is important you understand that there are penalties under
the Act for knowingly providing a response or information that is false or
misleading. This is a public hearing and a transcript of your evidence will be
20 made for the public record. If you wish to make a confidential statement
during today's proceedings, you should request that that part of your evidence
be taken in private. You have previously been provided with the Inquiry's
terms of reference and information on giving evidence to the Inquiry. Before
we begin, do you have any questions about today's hearing?

25 MR BOYLE: No.

DR HALL: No.

30 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: For the transcript, could I ask each of you
to state your name and the capacity in which you are here today? And I would
also request that throughout the hearing, you briefly state your name prior to
speaking.

35 MR BOYLE: So I'm Joe Boyle. I'm currently the Chief
Executive of PathWest.

DR HALL: And I'm Dustin Hall. I'm a haematologist
with PathWest and I guess my main representation here will be as the Chair of
40 the PathWest Environmental Management System Working Group.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Mr Boyle, would you like to make a brief
opening statement?

45 MR BOYLE: Yes, thanks very much. I'm delighted to
be here and take part in the Inquiry. I do think it's a tremendous opportunity,
as some of the questions point to. Personally, I've worked in many countries
internationally – the UK, Middle East, United States and lastly, here in
Australia – and I do feel that this is an area where Australia, perhaps health in
50 Australia specifically, is lagging, and I think there's a real opportunity to get
some momentum into the space as quickly as possible.

[10:02:43]

5 I think this Inquiry, the Sustainable Health Review and the work that's spinning off that, they're all fantastic opportunities to provide a real kick-start, if I can call it that, to the work that will no doubt follow from the Inquiry's findings. So I really welcome the opportunity to be part of that.

10 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Thank you. And certainly, other witnesses to the Inquiry, and through the written submissions, would support that. I don't think anyone in the health sector in WA thinks we're leading in the space at the moment, but there certainly is an opportunity to build some momentum and fairly quickly - - -

15 MR BOYLE: Yes.

20 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: - - - and there is great support for that. Establishment of this Inquiry was a specific recommendation of the Sustainable Health Review, which also made separate recommendations for the health system to reduce its environmental footprint as a matter of priority, and begin transparent public reporting on its footprint by July 2020. How do you see the issue of climate change connecting to ideas of sustainability more broadly, and in which areas relevant to your work could the health sector progress more quickly? You mentioned that broadly, but is there anything specifically you think we could make some headway on?

25 MR BOYLE: I mean, I think the two are, sort of, really strongly interlinked. And I think people probably struggle in the terminology with, you know, climate change, sustainability, energy preservation. Whatever that topic is, it's not quite sure of what umbrella to... or terminology. But I do think they're very closely linked in many ways. They can be all the same thing depending on how you define it. I do think, though, as we said in the opening statement, they are an opportunity. I know from my own work on the sustainable health program that, you know, all of these recommendations and strategies are gradually beginning to get some analysis, some definitions, what programs, very early stages, but... you know, so therefore, I think that will be a key driver, and I know the team involved in that are very much looking forward to the findings of this review, and use that very much as a template to help going forwards as well.

40 I think just the fact that we're now talking about it, and these pieces of work now exist, I would have to say, up until the last couple of months in my year as Chief Executive, the discussions around the environment have been, you know, minimal to zero. And certainly, in my internal work within PathWest, very close to zero, as well, as other priorities or other work, you know, is taking precedence. But it's not been part of the internal systems in any shape or form in the way that you would talk about the quality system, you would come across that on a day-to-day basis in terms of safety and quality.

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I think in Europe environment comes close, you know, behind that, regularly, and discussions internally at corporate boardrooms. And that simply hasn't been the case here.

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So I think in a number of areas, and... establishing our own committee is the first step for us to start to do some self-analysis as to where we are in this space and what priorities we can set for ourselves, as well as those that come out of the broader reviews. And Dustin's been doing some sort of initial work and pulling some thoughts together in that space. So yes, I think just tremendous opportunity. And I think because we're in such a relatively low base start, it'll be really... I think we can achieve real momentum quite quickly.

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DR HALL: And I'd certainly second that, since the formation of the Climate Health Inquiry, then expressions of interest amongst the organisation, putting the working group together – and there's internal mail that goes around about the fact that we're starting to do this – it's been quite surprising and really pleasant how many staff members have come up and, sort of, said, "This is great that this is happening, great to see that you're on it. How can I be a part of it?" Any organisational change, I think, often a major obstacle will be, you know, getting staff motivation. It's already done. I mean, they want it, they want it to happen. So I think the opportunity's there in terms of providing them a framework with which to do something about it, and they'll be very happy to be a part of it.

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We were just talking yesterday about, I think, at the moment, having only just formed things like these work groups, that staff members want it, they want to see their workplace doing it, they want to contribute to it. However, at the moment, they don't really feel empowered. Not that they're obstructed; they just don't have an avenue to do anything about it at the moment. And so I think, from a leadership perspective, from partner health and then leadership within organisations, if we can provide them that framework to do something about it, I think they'll wholeheartedly embrace it. So there's an opportunity to do that. And more than just a workplace, the public want it. Everyone's very much front and centre in their minds these days. So, I think, a great opportunity.

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And as Joe was saying before, in terms of accelerating what we're doing about it, unfortunately, the reality is up until now, we haven't been really doing much about it at all. So to move forward, we can do a lot very quickly now. So yes. And secondly, just on that first point, as well, I think, also, that, thankfully, people understand a lot now that minimising their environmental footprint needn't necessarily be a costly venture. I think there was a view not so long ago that that would cost a lot of money to do, whereas I think that there would be initiatives that would certainly cost, but there'd be a lot of other initiatives that they would be quick gains, won't take a lot, wouldn't cost a lot and fairly quickly, would save money, I think.

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5 So we referenced that, I think, in our submission, that the Royal College of Pathologists Australia quality assessment program has published a bit of stuff over the last couple of years now, and they work in that space, and showing actual significant cost savings through sustainability measures. So, you know, the models are there, in their infancy, and it won't take much to get it up and going, I think.

10 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: And I take your point about the struggle with terminology. And I think issues like sustainability, you know, emissions, waste, climate, they do get talked about, and certainly we struggle with that as well, in the Inquiry. Having said that, I don't think we'll ever get to a point of absolute definitional clarity, and I don't think you need that. But part of what you're saying, as well, is that we need to build a, kind of, conversational culture which is part of the enabling environment. So if people like yourself are talking about this, even the difficulties and struggles that you're having with it, that then creates a conversational environment where staff feel encouraged to, you know, put forward ideas, et cetera.

20 DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: So I do think that's important, and what you're saying about the shift is vital, and your, kind of, leadership in this space will be critical to the success of your organisation.

25 MR BOYLE: Yes. I think, as well, it's interesting, PathWest is probably a little bit different. You know, there's an industrial element to PathWest in the sense of the way we run laboratories, we use a lot of chemicals and reagents and there is a sort of, as I said, factory, industrial sort of aspect to the whole thing. And, you know, looking across our organisation, our understanding of waste and what happens to the waste, and is the waste... is it generated appropriately, and what happens to it, and how do you manage the supply chain? I mean, these are all questions that people haven't even asked.

30 And so, I think, you know, I feel, in particular, PathWest can really get their head around this. Because, you know, we can learn very quickly from best practice around the world, and just incorporate the culture and deal with some of the very basic questions, like, how do we measure waste, what happens to it, are we taking responsibility for that et cetera? And we use a lot of power and energy and water, and the processes that we work through. So again, nobody's really got their head around that and, sort of, challenged it or questioned it. And that's why I'm, sort of, very keen to go on with that, you know, and very excited about the opportunity.

45 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: And you could end up being a leader in the space yourself within a relatively short time.
[10:12:12]

MR BOYLE: I think the plan... I mean, you know, as I think about it, the fact that I have come from Europe and I do have a lot of people who've been specialist in this space, I think there's a real ability to connect and get some really quick wins, and just get the organisation really having a leadership around environmental work and sustainable work. So I'm optimistic that we can. And we're a smaller organisation as well, you know, and it's self-contained, to some extent. So I think we have a less complex sort of structure to manage change through. So that should help as well.

10 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: You say you're a small organisation, but you've also got an incredible number of sites across the state. And you've put that into your written submission. But would you just like to state for the record something around the scope of your organisation, and it's, kind of... literally its footprint in this state?

15 MR BOYLE: Yes, well we have around... just over 2,000 people. We have, I can't remember the exact numbers in the submission, but we have 26 solo laboratories, 50-odd collection centres. We have two major metropolitan hubs, in Fiona Stanley and in the QEII. So we cover, you know, the entire regional network. In terms of other parts of our businesses, it's obviously challenging for us to deal with the volume that comes through the metropolitan hospitals, and then the logistical challenges of running pathology services across the state, very much. So we're very close to the other Health Service Providers and Country Health, in particular, when it comes to managing those regional logistic challenges that we have, as well, in terms of staffing, callouts, having the right services in the right place, getting the balance of that correct. But yes, we are the state provider for the whole system, and it really does break down into those large metropolitan hubs, and then there's a significant number of smaller regional laboratories.

30 DR HALL: The geographic distances, I think – sorry.

35 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: If I could ask you, just for the record, just so we get the audio transcript right for you, if you just wouldn't mind just stating your name.

40 DR HALL: Sorry, yes, so Dustin Hall. Yes, I think the geographic distances that WA faces, with some of the laboratories spread out all over the state, brings with it its own challenges, but probably some opportunities for technological innovation, I think, in that space, as well, in terms of things like digital pathology, trying to look at models around minimisation of transportation costs. Those are the sort of areas where, while challenging, may actually offer opportunities for significant gains in terms of both physical, as well as environmental, footprints, you know, sustainability.

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So in some ways, the models could have substantial benefits in terms of that sort of thing.

5 So a big stretched-out organisation comes with some opportunities as well.
And we were just talking this morning about some opportunities. So the
technology is getting there just now, actually, with digital pathology options, as
well. So, for example, things like digital scanning of blood films or digital
10 incorporation of some other pathology things which would then hopefully start
to reduce needs for transportation of those samples around the state and things,
which is already happening within the organisation. But opportunities for
innovation grants in this space would be excellent. Then they'll end up serving
all sustainability goals, reducing environmental footprint while also improving
patient turnaround times for results and improving financial sustainability, as
well.

15 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: And you might be interested in listening
to the evidence that the Director General of Health just gave, which certainly is
supportive of that kind of approach, so it'll be interesting to tie those things
together. The Minister of Health wrote to area Health Service Provider boards
20 in April this year, encouraging membership of the Global Green and Healthy
Hospitals Network, which is an international community of hospitals and
health services dedicated to reducing their ecological footprint. And also the
chairs or deputy chairs and the chief executives have come and given evidence
to the Inquiry. All of the area health service providers have given written
25 submissions, as well. I'm just wondering whether you've noticed any greater
focus on these issues in your interaction with area health service providers in
the last few months, or is that something that might come later?

30 MR BOYLE: So, Joe Boyle. I'd have to say no, not yet.
The forums that I've been involved with – and there was a question later that
talks about interaction with HSPs and how the space, perhaps, has got a bit of
momentum in it – but in terms of that particular initiative and how the HSPs
are maybe beginning to mobilise themselves around that work, it's not really
been visible to me yet, I'd have to say.

35 DR HALL: Yes, I found, when we were putting the
submission together and then forming the group, trying to find literature out
there and examples of frameworks to work with and things like that, I must
confess I didn't come across that, actually, until this question came up.
40 Subsequently, having a look at it, I think it's a great initiative. And like all
things, if you can find a framework with which to work around and to help you
start. I love their idea, as well, where they've got this 10-point sustainability
goals. But they sort of say, “when you're saying that you're going to be part of
this, pick two and how you're going to focus on that”, I think that's a great
45 idea, and just slowly plug away. And we were talking about that the other day,
about how, you know, one at a time moving through them.
[10:18:26]

I work at Fiona Stanley Hospital and a number of regional hospitals, and I'm on the Medical Executive Board there, and a couple of other boards as well. I haven't heard it mentioned. I was not aware of it before this submission, actually, which is a bit of a shame. I think, just more broadly as well, when interacting with other Health Service Providers – and we'll talk about it a little bit later with supply chains and things like that, as well – a lot of organisations are starting to get together an environmental policy. But I think it will be important, when we move forward, are they actually doing anything with that? It's not a written a document and stuff on their web page, there needs to be something behind those words. And sorry, my name is Dustin Hall.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Thanks, Dustin. And I think it's important to be realistic about where people are at.

DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: But also that this Inquiry has given an opportunity for people to trigger conversations.

DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: And people, you know, area Health Service Providers may not themselves be aware that PathWest has such an interest as you have expressed this morning. And by people expressing this interest publicly and then connecting up later, you build a conversation. And we'll certainly made some recommendations in the Inquiry about ways to sustain a conversation, including having, kind of, meetings in this state which brings the members of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Networks together.

DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Also private providers, also PathWest, you know, also whoever else should be part of that conversation - - -

DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: - - - as a follow up to the Inquiry. You have mentioned already that you see procurement and the broader supply chain as an area where PathWest can make some improvements. So are you able to outline any further what opportunities you see for PathWest to pursue greener purchasing or procurement policies?

MR BOYLE: Again, I think it's a – sorry, Joe Boyle – it's an open landscape. Because while we do have a state that has some disclosures within our, sort of, tendering process, in terms of evaluation, our [10:20:46]

5 incorporating environmental sustainability preferences into the evaluation is that they are... again, they're either very weak or non-existent. And therefore, in the selection of vendors, I don't believe that particular theme or issue has really been properly probed. And again, you're dealing, often, with large international companies who are relatively advanced in some of these, and you do have an ability to potentially identify the ones who are greener than others, and can contribute to our own organisation in a more constructive way.

10 So I think we need to... because PathWest, on an operating basis is, I guess, as much of health as we have – we have a lot of people, and then we buy a lot of things to deliver the services, be it reagents or equipment and consumables. And we have a tremendous opportunity to make sure that we are driving back into our supply chain and learning from that supply chain how best we can improve our sustainability, sort of, culture, and ultimately select suppliers who have a bit stronger sustainability credentials. And again, a lot of what we're talking about internally today, I don't think that conversation or challenge has been going on. And I think we can incorporate that in broader state procurement, in health procurement and local PathWest procurement, and make it a stronger part of the whole evaluation criteria. And again, just learning from my European experiences, that is quite often a significant part of much procurement that goes on in Europe, which scores quite highly in the evaluation scoring metrics as to how well suppliers have responded, and offering options that will improve their environmental footprints.

25 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: We've also heard from Health Supply Services chief executive, and they also are very keen to do more in this space, and they're looking at their policies and their practices. To what degree does PathWest rely on HSS for, you know, its policy parameters and/or specifics in terms of purchasing, or do you run separately?

30 MR BOYLE: So what is both... so for lots of consumable tape procurement, the catalogue items, you know, that we will buy based on HSS is catalogues and therefore, their procurement and bulk purchasing and all that is very much... we rely very heavily on them. So their policies will be important for a part of our procurement. There's another part of our procurement which is very specific to us, you know, especially around reagents and the chemicals used in the laboratory processes. And depending on the scale of the procurement, we do then obviously coordinate with HSS and ultimately Treasury in decision-making and process. But I think, between us all, the criteria has got to be lined up so that we have a consistent approach. So it's a real mixed bag, procurement, between stuff that we drive locally, stuff that's driven through HSS and stuff that goes all the way up to Treasury for oversight.

45 DR HALL: And Dustin Hall. Only learning myself how these structures, sort of, work, but recently learning about the HSS
[10:24:40]

structure and the way that we order things through them, I think, again, that actually offers quite a good opportunity, really, to essentially enforce environmentally appropriate purchasing policies. And this is a tiny example, but there's no reason why we couldn't just remove Styrofoam cups off that list, why we couldn't change paper to recycled paper, you know, things like that. And maybe they're not completely prohibited from accessing, but there is a separate, more complicated system to access items that are deemed more, or to have a more significant environmental footprint type, sort of thing. So that would be a great opportunity there.

And even if they didn't wish to do it, we were talking about yesterday that we would somehow work with HSS to have, essentially, a separate PathWest inventory that branch laboratories and things can order from, sort of emphasising our desire for those to agree to be environmentally appropriate items on that list, recycled paper or things like that, where appropriate and whatnot, or just removing Styrofoam cups and plastic cups from the inventory list and things. And then secondly, when we're looking at equipment to purchase for ourselves, then it would be... then fall more upon PathWest to more thoroughly assess the environmental credentials of the equipment that we're purchasing. And again, I don't know quite yet how we would do this, but I would really like to see more than just, "Okay, we're going to purchase this piece of equipment from this company, that has environmental policy", like, I want, "What are you actually doing about that? What are your environmental credentials? Why are we reassured that this is the appropriate path to take?" And hopefully, as the state-wide Health Service, we can harness and leverage on that, kind of, buying power to demand this of suppliers, taking back packaging, using environmentally-friendly packaging, reusing that packaging and appropriate waste disposal.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: I think there would be really fantastic potential in further conversation between yourselves and HSS, given that your values, as expressed to the Inquiry, are very similar, where you want to get to. And yep, I think there's a clear potential to do more between the two of you, as well as with the area health service providers. The other point I'd make is – and also both of you bring that international... both chief executives bring that international experience to their view of what's happening in Western Australia, which again, I think, is useful.

But the other point is around the evaluation criteria. So this is not something that I am particularly expert in, but hearing from people who are experts, seems to be that the policy frameworks, or procurement frameworks, are generally facilitatory if you wish to purchase using environmental criteria as part of the criteria. So there's nothing particular that says you can't, but the expression of that by various Health Service Providers can either include a self-assessment of environmental capability by the providers or tenderers, but not necessarily include that in the weighting... in the criteria that are used to decide whether they get the contract.

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So it might be that they have to do some kind of self-assessment, they have to tell you what their environmental credentials are, but it's not actually in the criteria. And then if it is in the criteria, it may not necessarily be weighted.

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DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: So there's a number of ways that you could potentially tweak this system - - -

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DR HALL: Yes.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: - - - if you wish to get different outcomes.

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MR BOYLE: Yes, Joe Boyle. Absolutely, Tarun. There's nothing stopping you, in terms of developing your weightings in your criteria. There's a fair degree of licence and putting that together, but it typically doesn't appear. And usually, the environmental policy submission element is usually just part of the tick box of, like, having to comply with providing all the necessary documentation. And that just gets you, you know, through the door. But in terms of then evaluating that, and evaluating other aspects beyond that, it typically doesn't make it into the evaluation criteria and then any significant weighting. And again, that's an opportunity overnight, even if you start it with a relatively small weighting, where it starts to - - -

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DR HALL: Yes.

MR BOYLE: - - - appear, it starts to appear and is being considered. And suppliers know that that becomes part of the weighting, then they step up their game, basically, in explaining themselves and selling that part of their business. So there's just immediate changes that we can make to just weighting criteria, at early stages, to start to see that happen.

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DR HALL: Dustin Hall here. It kind of links in a little bit to a later question about what the, sort of, Department of Health do, I think, a little bit in that leadership space. But, kind of, start emphasising to the health care providers that... "put a weighting criteria in that procurement document". I think it would be very sensible, as you say, maybe in the beginning. And it doesn't necessarily have to have a large weighting, because think we've also got to be realistic about, realistically, our limited knowledge and expertise around what constitutes a more environmentally sound company, or piece of equipment and things. But at least there's something in there that we can formally say, "this actually added to the successful application", or "this is a reason why we have rejected this application". So yes, I think it would be a great opportunity, yes.

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PROF WEERAMANTHRI: I might address this question to you, Dr Hall, as Chair of the group. Can you tell us more about the environmental management system you're developing and the role of the EMS working group?

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DR HALL: Yes. So Dustin Hall. It's born out of the submission to this parliamentary Inquiry,¹ where it became fairly clear very early on that if we were going to do something in the space, that was the first thing required – that was to actually put it together, a working group. That was essentially formed... that working group was born out of the group of people who put together this submission, and that was born, initially, out of an expressions of interest email that went around to staff members. And it's obviously got to be a combination of people's experience, but also their relative passion in this area, as well, to make a change and make some difference.

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It has formed a group. At the moment, the regular meetings are once a month, and there's about eight members at the moment, but that will probably expand fairly quickly. And that ranges from members from the executive, medical staff, scientists, as well. And that's the notion; we're trying to get a group together that will represent, from a leadership body through to grassroots, staff members as well, that will provide those initiatives. The first step was putting together this submission. The next step will be putting together an environmental management policy. And then, I think, it's going to be then a situation where we then start educating staff members that this exists, start giving them avenues. We've already put together a web page on our hub about where staff members can start submitting ideas, where we start to encourage all staff members to start putting forward ideas and initiatives, in branch labs, as well as tertiary centres, as well.

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And then, I think, a great initiative next would be to actually adopt this Global Green and Healthy Hospitals and start putting together some of those frameworks that they've put together. I think it would be a great place to start. Joe's been very supportive of this, as has everyone I've spoken to. They've been very supportive of this. And more than just saying, "That's a good idea, good work", people are actually keen to be a part of it, as well. So I think it would be more a matter of finding how to make everyone a part of it, actually, rather than finding enough enthusiasm to be a part of it.

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Sort of an aspirational goal was we put in our submission there – and I guess, at this stage, I don't think we can say, definitively, we can achieve this just yet, but is this, you know, sort of formal ISO accreditation, ISO 14001, which, coming back to a bit to what we were talking about before, when you look at an organisation, okay, you've got an environmental policy that's nice. All right, what are you actually doing about it? It's always going to be difficult to actually assess that. Some sort of formal accreditation in that space, like the ISO accreditation, I think would be a good start, whereby you... and we could

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¹ Note: The Climate Health WA Inquiry is a statutory inquiry being conducted by the Chief Health Officer of WA, not a parliamentary inquiry.

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5 even potentially start saying – it's a great opportunity to lead that and, sort of, say, "Look, we have achieved this ISO accreditation", maybe even just in some pilot sites initially, and then say that to our suppliers et cetera, and other health service providers, "We've done it, we can help you, and this is the ideas and obstacles we've come across. But any reason why you can't do it now as well, being a leader in that space, I think would be great".

10 Yes, so beyond that, we were talking yesterday about... so at the moment, it's sort of people who were in many other busy roles being a part of that environmental working group, but we're... and Joe is already looking at what staff members could this start to become part of their actual formal job description, to be part of this environmental working group. And I don't know
15 if you want to talk to that anymore?

MR BOYLE: So Joe Boyle. There's just two very practical things. One is that we will undoubtedly appoint someone, you know, who will solely have an environmental responsibility, sustainability
20 responsibility, whether that's 0.5 or a full FTE, there will be somebody who... because at the moment, everyone who's in the committee has obviously got their standard day job, and this is just something that they're showing some leadership and volunteering for. The other thing is that, just going through my first cycle of performance reviews, and an observation is it's not typically good
25 at very specific, measurable objectives. And my intention is for all our principal scientists – the way our organisation works, each of the lab components is broken down into principal scientists, and they're the ones that really drive a lot of the processes and practices within the various work structures – is that they will have specific objectives around sustainability.
30 Initially, those will be, "What are you doing in this space, what ideas have you come up with?" And then ultimately, it's a real test as to: are they thinking, are they showing some leadership, and are they coming up with measurable changes? And that's going to be built into their job descriptions and in their objective setting on an annual basis.

35 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Just for the record, Dr Abernethie would want me to just state that this is a statutory Inquiry, rather than a parliamentary Inquiry. And also that, just in your written submission, you actually named the standard that you just spoke to, which is ISO 14001 Environmental
40 Management Systems.

DR HALL: Yes, yes.

45 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Thank you. Just going to that staff aspect, what did your recent survey reveal about staff expectations with respect to reducing emissions and environmental waste? I believe there was some enthusiasm there. And are these expectations changing?

[10:36:31]

DR HALL: Maybe I can initially speak to that, if you like. Yes, so it's Dustin Hall. So that was actually an idea that was put together by one of the scientists on the environmental working group, to put together a survey. And it was quite impressive how quickly that was put together and how many respondents we got in a very short period of time. The idea was to get that done prior to the submission. But we could probably, obviously, expand that much further. I think probably two points that we sort of noticed is that overwhelmingly, everyone was very enthused to be a part of it. Everyone was already doing things with reducing their environmental footprint, aspects of it at home – I shouldn't say everyone, but the majority of respondents were already doing things like this at home, looking to do things like it in the workplace.

But also, most of the respondent notions, I think, were fairly... what would be their – I'm trying to think of the terminology... but there would be things like bringing keep cups, utilising recycle bins. So I guess the respondents, initially, were thinking about great ideas, but it's small level ideas. And things that they could immediately do, which is great, and we could help them with. But I think a big role of the environmental working group would also be in education of those staff members, to start demanding more of a much bigger organisational change. And that would be the platform that we can help them with.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Yes. We're just into the last five or 10 minutes of the hearing, so I might ask you to give fairly short answers - - -

MR BOYLE: Sure.

PROF WEERAMANTHRI: - - - to these questions, if you don't mind. There are a couple of areas which, you know, you've said that you may not be particularly advanced, looking specifically at environmental matters, but you are experts, for years and years in terms of other major initiatives around, you know, safety and quality, infection control, but also reducing testing and things like that, which have major environmental benefits, which might have been measured or might not have been, but they're still significant. So could you talk to issues relating to pathology collection, diagnostic testing that you have addressed to reduce duplication, waste, low-value care and costs?

MR BOYLE: So Joe Boyle. So we have an initiative, if we can call it that – I think more than just an initiative, a concept – what we call 'perfect pathology'. And it's a continuum that sort of puts the patient at the centre, and, you know, it talks about quality and delivery of those services. And one of those many aspects that you can draw out of that is basically, that we shouldn't be doing tests that are unnecessary, and we shouldn't be taking blood or, you know... and we shouldn't have interactions with a patient that are just duplication.

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5 So we've been selling and promoting that concept with the HSPs. Historically, before my time, there have been a couple of initiatives around targeted areas. For example, there was a big piece of work done at ICU at Fiona Stanley to reduce repeat testing and repeat ordering of tests, which was successful and made significant savings in terms of the amount of... the cost of tests that have been delivered into ICU.

10 But broadly speaking, how we're tackling this, as part of the fight to be a separate HSP, we've created a formal forum between us and the other HSPs, where we sit down and we review test results. We review, sorry, test numbers. So it's not a clinical forum, it's just looking at the cost of pathology, the number of tests, the quality issues that have cropped up, and really how that whole perfect pathology ideal is being successfully achieved. And really, using that forum to try and prompt discussions and projects and initiatives to do all of that, you know, and ideally reduce waste, and basically provide a better added value service to our client groups and the HSP forum. So it's very simple. We have created a forum, we're providing data in our very regular and consistent way; before the interactions were random, the data was random, but we're trying to get consistency and consistency.

25 This year has really been the first year, as the last year was our first year as an HSP. So we're just getting those things off the ground. But already, the discussions are bearing some fruit, and we are seeing projects to basically reduce, you know, unnecessary pathology testing, which is one of the core elements of the initiative.

30 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: So this is my final question, and please feel free, as well, to offer any closing remarks. At a policy level, what role could the Department of Health play in supporting PathWest in your endeavours?

35 MR BOYLE: Joe Boyle. Very simplistically, I think, you know, it's all about leadership, now, as well, and I think the Department needs to show leadership. They need to have a strong and ambitious policy, if you like, in this space. I think if you accept as truth the fact that it's largely not a spoken mantra, that we need to get it on the Department's agenda at the system manager level, such that at important sessions – the regular leadership meetings – that environmental sustainability matters matter, and are discussed. So I think, you know, policy is one element of that, and I think it would be more than helpful to get leadership from the top, but then to take it beyond policy to have it as a very active and regular part of, you know, what the executive team are discussing, and how we're all feeling in that space.

45 DR HALL: Yes, Dustin Hall. I think very much like what Joe has mentioned there already, that that strong leadership stance and expectation that it becomes part of the regular discussion on any matters of

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5 organisational management, procurement, whatever it be; perhaps even some changes around what we're talking about, where actually the procurement policies get changed such that, actually, environmental matters get a weighting in those. And then going forward, a lot of these things needn't necessarily cost much money, initially, but some innovation and access to innovation funds to make some pilot projects that make some change, I think would be great initiatives, and people would be very keen to be a part of those.

10 MR BOYLE: Joe Boyle. Just one simple thing. We have the famous WA Health Awards. It would be good to see a very strong environmental sustainability award appear as one of those awards. I think that would give it a platform. And it isn't necessarily always just about, you know, 15 the front delivery clinical service, it's what goes on in the background. Because much of what we talk about is isn't necessarily front and centre, so it's more about the engine room or the industrial elements, the facilities management and stuff like that. So getting Innovation and Sustainability would be great awards to see on the list.

20 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: That's a great idea to end with. We'll just have to work out who the sponsor of that award would be.

25 MR BOYLE: I'll sponsor the first one.

30 PROF WEERAMANTHRI: Thank you both for your attendance at today's hearing. A transcript of this hearing will be sent to you so that you can correct minor factual errors before it is placed on the public record. Please return the transcript within 10 working days of the date of the covering letter or email, otherwise it will be deemed to be correct. While you cannot amend your evidence, if you would like to explain particular points in more detail or present further information, you can provide this as an addition to your submission to the Inquiry when you return the transcript. Once again, thank you very much for your evidence.

35 MR BOYLE: Thank you.

HEARING CONCLUDED