

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.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

Western Australia has been a national leader in identifying and responding to the human impacts of global heating. The next few years not only represent a critical period for the global response to the climate crisis, but also in transforming Australian health systems' responses. Western Australia can, and should, lead this change.

My colleagues Dr Fiona Haigh (UNSW Sydney), Dr Kate Charlesworth (South Eastern Sydney Local Health District) and I recommend four discrete sets of activities that have the potential to strengthen WA and Australia's overall response to the health impacts of global heating, and to enhance the health of the people of Western Australia in the future.

1. To update the Adaptation Strategies for Western Australia [1] analysis that was undertaken twelve years ago, with specific reference to vulnerabilities for younger people, older people, Aboriginal people, people living in regional and remote areas, low socioeconomic status groups, specific cultural and language groups, recent migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, people with multi-morbidities. Adaptation has been identified as a critical area for activity and research [2]. Similar work is currently being undertaken in South Eastern and South Western Sydney, funded by the Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE).

2. Climate breakdown is having, and will increasingly have, catastrophic impacts on human health. Our health services/ systems use huge amounts of natural resources and produce vast quantities of waste and carbon pollution, and so, ironically, are contributing to the environmental breakdown which is harming human health. The

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health sector itself can play a significant role, through measures such as enhanced carbon accounting, emission reductions, develop and retain green spaces, supporting active travel, supply chain review, and waste management [3, 4]. There is some evidence that a triple-bottom-line approach, measuring health, monetary and environmental costs/outcomes, has the potential to have a “win-win-win” effect for health systems, resulting in improved health, financial savings, and carbon savings [5].

3. Biodiversity and the availability and quality of water are directly affected by the climate crisis, and are critical and under-recognised determinants of human health [6]. Biodiversity and water quality and availability require distinct and specific sections within the overall WA Climate and Health strategic response.

4. The need for specific and distinct assessment of climate change adaptations to protect and enhance health to be included in the scope/Terms of Reference for all major project environmental assessments and strategic assessments undertaken in Western Australia.

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On behalf of A/Prof Ben Harris-Roxas, Dr Fiona Haigh and Dr Kate Charlesworth

REFERENCES

1. WA Health. Health Impacts of Climate Change: Adaptation strategies for Western Australia. 2007.
2. Liu, Tao and Wenjun Ma. 2019. ‘Climate Change and Health: More Research on Adaptation Is Needed’. The Lancet Planetary Health 3(7):e281–82.
3. Malik A, Lenzen M, McAlister S, McGain F. The carbon footprint of Australian health care. The Lancet Planetary Health. 2018;2:e27–35.
4. SESLHD. SESLHD Environmental Sustainability Plan 2019-2021. Sydney: South Eastern Sydney Local Health District; 2019.
5. Pencheon, David. n.d. ‘Developing a Sustainable Health Care System: The United Kingdom Experience’. Medical Journal of Australia 208(7):284.
5. Harris-Roxas B. Health Impact Assessment in the Asia Pacific. Environmental Impact Assessment Review. 2011;31:393–5.

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