



Climate Health WA Inquiry

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

**Hearing Lead:
Dr Sarah Joyce**

Witnesses:

**Mr Nick Sloan
Chief Executive Officer, WA Local Government Association**

**Ms Joanne Burges
Executive Manager People & Place, WA Local Government
Association**

**Mr Mark Batty
Executive Manager Environment and Waste, WA Local
Government Association**

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HEARING COMMENCED

5 DR JOYCE: I would like to thank you for your interest
in the Inquiry and for your appearance at today's hearing. The purpose of this
hearing is to assist Professor Tarun Weeramanthri in gathering evidence for the
Climate Health WA Inquiry into the impacts of climate change on health in
Western Australia. My name is Dr Sarah Joyce and I'm the Project Director
10 for the Inquiry. To my right is Dr Revle Bangor-Jones, who's the Public
Health Advisor for the Inquiry. I have been instructed by Professor
Weeramanthri under section 230 of the *Public Health Act 2016* to conduct
today's hearing. Please be aware that the use of mobile phones and other
recording devices is not permitted in this room, and please make sure that all
phones are 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 evidence under oath or
affirmation, it is important that you understand that there are penalties under
the Act for knowingly providing a response or information that is misleading or
20 false. This is a public hearing and a transcript of your evidence will be 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,
25 do you have any questions about today's hearing?

MR SLOAN: No.

30 MS BURGES: No.

MR BATTY: No.

35 DR JOYCE: No. Great. For the transcripts, could I
ask each of you to state your name and the capacity in which you are here
today? And can I also ask that throughout the hearing, you briefly state your
name prior speaking for the audio transcript.

40 MS BURGES: Starting this end, Joanne Burges. My role
with the West Australian Local Government Association is Executive Manager
of People and Place, and I come here in that capacity.

DR JOYCE: Thank you.

45 MR SLOAN: Yes, my name is Nick Sloan, I'm the Chief
Executive Officer of the Western Australian Local Government Association.

50 MR BATTY: And my name's Mark Batty and I'm the
Executive Manager of Environment and Waste at the WA Local Government
Association.

DR JOYCE: Thank you. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

MR SLOAN: Yes, I will, thanks, just quickly. I'd just like to start by expressing our gratitude for the opportunity through, obviously, the Association and our 138 members to attend the hearing, and we certainly look forward to providing the panel with input into this important Inquiry. It goes without saying that good health is essential to the well-being of the communities that local governments serve. The impacts of climate change such as heatwaves, extreme weather events and increasing pollutants and allergens, and changing patterns of disease have the capacity to affect the health of all West Australians, particularly the vulnerable. Our association recognises the role that local governments take in relation to the health impacts of climate change.

The Association would encourage the Department of Health to continue to build resilience into the health system to ensure that there is adaptive capacity to deal with the increased stressors that climate change will create on a health system already under pressure. As you'd be aware, WALGA has previously provided a written submission, and we understand that there are a number of issues arising out of that submission that the Inquiry would like to address, and we're really grateful for the opportunity to do that today.

DR JOYCE: Thank you very much. And thank you also for your very comprehensive and very helpful written submission to the Inquiry. In July 2018, the WA Local Government Association, which I may refer to as WALGA from now on, for the transcript, endorsed a policy statement on climate change. What was the driving force behind that process, what does it broadly say and what has happened since?

MR BATTY: Mark Batty. The climate change policy statement replaces the Association's 2009 position. The development of an updated policy position was prompted from a 2017 resolution from the WALGA Southeast Metropolitan Zone requesting WALGA review its policy statement, as well as a recognition of contemporary scientific understanding of climate change, international and national political developments, and the increasing urgency for effective climate change adaptation and mitigation action. In developing the contemporary policy position, WALGA undertook extensive consultation with its members, including provision of a discussion paper and a draft position paper to the sector for their feedback. Local government was overwhelmingly in favour of a strong statement on the need for urgent action by all levels of government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The statement, therefore, forms the basis of WALGA's climate change advocacy on behalf of and alongside the sector.

DR JOYCE: Thank you. Mr Sloan, you mentioned in your opening statement that WALGA supports the work of 138 local governments - - -

5 MR SLOAN: Yes.

DR JOYCE: - - - across the State. Have you been able to, sort of, adequately capture the variety of climate impacts that we see across WA, and in particular any physical and mental health impacts in the
10 community?

MR SLOAN: Sure. Look, I'll make some preliminary comments, if that's okay, and then I'll refer you to Jo. You would appreciate that, with 138 members, local government isn't a homogenous group. There's
15 enormous diversity, not just in challenges that are faced by local governments across Western Australia, but in scale and capacity to respond to those challenges. It's one of the inherent challenges for us, as a representative body for our members, to be able to undertake really deep and thorough consultation on important matters of complex policy. This is obviously a very good
20 example of that. So the extent to which we're able to effectively do a deep dive into the issues across the sector in the time that's available can present us with challenges at various times. So I might just refer to Jo to go through in a bit more detail the process we went through to provide feedback to this Inquiry.

MS BURGESS: Thank you. Joanne Burgess. I think, first and foremost, that I'd like to state that the terminology "climate health" is relatively new terminology, and so part of the process has been getting a feeling around, you know, what that means. So in answer to the question about
30 adequately being able to capture the variety of climate impacts, I'd have to say not specifically, because we're not aware of actual research or record keeping of any government agency that attributes the impacts of natural disasters or other events on people or property as climate change impacts. So there's figures about the impacts of natural disasters or extreme weather, but not absolutely attributing to climate change impacts.

35 There is a lot in the news currently about those various views with regard to bushfires over east. I think that, with regard to local governments, they're anecdotally aware of the physical and mental health impacts and, in fact, mental health, particularly with regard to local health plans and the way in
40 which they will be formulated or have formed. We do note that the local government sector, even with the draft interim State Public Health Plan, requested that mental health be included in that documentation. And as part of that, the design and implementation of Health Impact Assessments, together with research data and evaluation, will be a key way in which climate health
45 can be considered in planning decisions and strengthening and linking relative legislation.

As the CEO has referred to, without the absolute time to consult with the sector to form an official position of WALGA on climate health, it's difficult to capture that and collate that information to inform the request. So the submission relied heavily on our existing climate change policy statement. So with that, we do know that there is divergent views. And so I think, into the future, and as we move along, we'd be able to more readily capture that. As of now, it's been a difficult one to capture that collective view.

DR JOYCE: Thank you very much. Perhaps following on from that question, because you did mention the local public health plans - - -

MS BURGES: Yes.

DR JOYCE: - - - that local governments will be required to produce under the *Public Health Act*, and I know some have already produced them.

MS BURGES: Correct.

DR JOYCE: Could you make any further comment around how that process is going, and is climate change adequately incorporated or included in either the State or the local public health plans, and what further support you might like to see in that space?

MS BURGES: Thank you. Joanne Burges. So the strategic nature of the process is going very well. Implementing the Act is supported by the Department of Health Public Health Planning Reference Group – bit of a mouthful – and the Association is represented on that group. It was formed to ensure the views of the Public and Aboriginal Health Division. The health services providers and local government are represented in the ongoing administration of part 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016*, related to public health planning across WA. And this includes the requirements for the State Public Health Plan and local government public health plans, as you've outlined.

Part of the work of that group, for example, has included the publishing of a, “What is local government's role in public health” YouTube clip, and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities of the WA health system to ensure support is provided to local governments who initiate the development of their public health plan in accordance with part 5 of the Act. The group referred to... as – I'll refer to it in long form again – the Public Health Planning Reference Group - recently established the Health Status Report Working Group to provide guidance to local governments in meeting their requirements to produce a health status report in accordance with section 45(4)(b) of the Act. And there have been concerns raised by local governments in terms of accessing and interpreting data for those health status reporting.

So with that in mind, is climate change adequately included in the State Public Health Plan? For instance, the Sustainable Health Review final report, recommendation 5 on page 56, refers to the reduction of health systems' environmental footprint and the assurance of mitigation and adaptation strategies are in place to respond to the health impacts and risks of climate change. And further, climate change is captured under Objective 2, "providing health protection for the community", of the State Public Health Plan. That Objective 2, Priority Area 2.3, is about "mitigate the impacts of public health emergencies", with a priority action being "establish a climate change adaptation plan to protect public health from harmful impacts of climate change".

So where to from that? It could be useful, considering that the State Public Health Plan is based on the South Australian model, part of their State Public Health Plan has a separate fourth priority area, specifically to respond to climate change and environmental health risks. The WA State Public Health Plan could, therefore, be strengthened to align with the South Australian plan. And we could also learn very much from what has been achieved in South Australia, as they've been implementing the public health plan for a number of years. So much so we have an interest in what is occurring in South Australia, that we are in the early stages of looking at holding an information event about health and well-being and bringing key people from South Australia to share their insights and some of the lessons learned.

We recognise, also, that it's clear that a significant shift in thinking and resourcing is required from local government to establish the new foundations of public and preventative health services that will assist in delivering the objectives. We also note that although we've got until 2021 to achieve those results, we are still encouraging all of our members to move towards achieving their local public health planning. With regard to further support, we'd like to see a coordinated approach from State Government that supports and facilitates the policy environment. Perhaps development on and publication of a WA health system dashboard, that incorporates key system level measures for sustainability and key existing performance, safety and quality measures to drive and report progress on change. We also support the development of baseline health data, to be reported within the State and local government health status reports, to ensure consistency across local government and by the HSPs, particularly metropolitan and regional. Thank you.

DR JOYCE: Thank you. And that's a very helpful point around the South Australia Public Health Plan. I think the Victorian Public Health Plan which was recently released have also now added climate change as a separate point into their health and well-being plan. They've obviously had public health planning legislation in for a while, as well. So lessons that can be learned, I guess, for WA.

MS BURGESS: Thank you.

DR JOYCE: Local governments have a critical and defined role in disaster preparedness and response. From your perspective, how well do the different levels of government work together, and are there any lessons that can be applied to a coordinated response to climate change.

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MR SLOAN: Yes – sorry, Nick Sloan. This is clearly a really important area for local government, and the extent to which there's a coordinated and collegial approach to... obviously, emergency management across both levels of government is critical for our members and for our sector. What I would say, before perhaps just asking Joanne to make some more comments, is that there are clearly defined roles within emergency management. And the State has adopted a principles-based approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery at a very high level, and again, we'll touch on some of those principles shortly. Our experience is things tend to work well when both levels of government are acting in the spirit of those principles. It's when there's a departure from that, that we do experience some issues. But I might ask Joanne to make some comments.

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MS BURGES: So, Joanne Burges. And thank you, Nick, for referring to those EM principles, which I'll touch on briefly to assist in informing the hearing today. The first of those principles is an all-hazards approach. The all-hazard approach increases efficiency by recognising and integrating common emergency management elements across all hazard types. Next being a graduated approach and just very briefly, that is based on decisions being made at the lowest appropriate level, being that subsidiarity level. However, existing command control and coordination arrangements that apply where those activities extend beyond the capability of that local community.

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The all-agencies coordinated, integrated approach principle recognises that no one agency can address all of the impacts of a particular hazard, and it's necessary for a lead agency to coordinate the activities of a large number of organisations and agencies that are involved. And I think, over time, we've seen where some of that's been problematic, but everyone knows that that's the principle that it's based on. Emergency management does require that collaboration, coordination and integration to facilitate complementary and coherent action by all partners, to ensure the most effective use of resource and activities. It's also based on a risk management approach.

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The adoption of consistent and comprehensive State emergency management risk approach is traditionally that prevention preparedness response and recovery approach aids effective decision-making, because it's looking right across, facilitates appropriate resource allocation and allows for a proactive approach towards emergency management. There's also the... under one of those principles, is the shared responsibility for resilience. And I think resilience is a word that we'll be hearing more and more of. So increasing resilience to emergencies is the collective responsibility of all sectors in society, including all levels of government, business, the non-government

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sector and individuals. And given the increasing severity and occurrence of natural hazards, all these sectors need to be empowered and work together with a united focus and shared sense of responsibility to keep hazards from becoming emergencies.

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Our planning approaches need to include risk reduction strategies and our capacity to deal with disasters needs to be enhanced by greater flexibility and adaptability of our emergency services agencies and communities, which leads to continuous improvement. And improvement in arrangements is achieved through the regular monitoring and reviewing of all of those statutory things such as plans, arrangements, policies, procedures at all levels, as well as capture and implementation of lessons identified by research and exercises and incident reviews. And as local government, we recognise the principle of community engagement... about the effective and timely communication with the community being critical, and a continuous process before during and after an emergency.

The information management, integrated, speaks to the collation assessment and verification and dissemination of relevant and appropriate information. So what we do know is that different levels of government do work well together when acting in the spirit of the principles, and not where the policy landscape has become onerous or too prescriptive. We know that the EM Act was originally designed in 2005 as an enabling piece of legislation. And in more recent times, we also recognise that—possibly based on some of the inquiries that have taken place, et cetera that have led to many recommendations—that the principles and intent seem to have been lost. And the legislation has been applied through a more stringent compliance regulatory framework, and this has been probably a little bit problematic.

We do recognise favourably, though, the Bushfire Risk Management Program, and that brings together not only all levels of government, but also industry and other sectors in the development of bushfire risk management plans. This program has received significant investment in this term of government by the emergency services levy. And it is managed centrally by DFES and they support local governments to undertake the development of tenure-blind, which is across all land owners and brings together all of those land holders to address these matters. So what that model does include is human resources, clear policy frameworks and availability of the mitigation funding, and is a sound model for consideration in all hazards contexts. So in answer to your question, yes, we believe that those levels of government do work well together. However, we do recognise that we've stepped away slightly from what we see is the essence, being that principles approach to emergency management. And we're hoping to see that this will be addressed as the three pieces of legislation are brought together in the coming year or so.

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DR JOYCE: Thank you. And at the previous formal hearing, we had the State Emergency Management Committee attend, and they acknowledged the important role that local government do in building

resilience within the community, both before and after an emergency event. I wondered if you have any comments around the role of local government in the recovery phase, specifically, after an event?

5 MS BURGES: Certainly. I'm thinking as we walked out
of the doors of the Association today, we are having a training session on this
very subject matter, so we take it very, very seriously. And we recognise the
incredible time and energy and impact that that has on the communities in that
10 recovery stage. And as part of their preparedness for recovery, most local
governments do take the opportunity to ensure that their leadership, usually
through their President or Mayor, is well across the arrangements as far as the
recovery process. I would suggest that, as much as communities are able to
15 recover, what that recovery looks like, I think, is different for every
community. And I think when we align that with health and well-being, I think
this is very much going to be something that needs to be considered,
particularly if it is seen that these events may increase into the future. So
whether that's about resourcing, that word that I brought up before around
20 "resilience", what does that actually look like? Yes, we can talk about it in
theory, but what does that look like in practicality?

MR SLOAN: Yes, and – sorry, Nick Sloan – the comment I
would make is it's where there's significant value in SEMC as a forum and an
opportunity to exchange information. So local governments are, obviously,
25 sensitive to policy shifts that might change their requirements or obligations
through that recovery – through their obligations to be involved in recovery.
So having a formal seat at the table at SEMC gives us the opportunity to
exchange information to ensure the lines of communication are clear. And for
us to, I guess, be very clear in our communication back to the sector, where
30 there might be shifts in policy, or potential proposed shifts in policy that have
an effect on the obligations that flow down through the sector. So I'd reflect
really positively on the way that SEMC functions and the role that the local
government sector, obviously through WALGA, has to contribute to that
forum.

35 MS BURGES: And Joanne Burges. Just a final comment
on this. We undertake an annual survey with our members, and emergency
management still ranks at number three, I do believe, as a highest priority for
local governments. So they take this area of their business very seriously.

40 DR JOYCE: Thank you very much. Perhaps, sort of,
keeping on the theme, then, around disaster preparedness and response, you
mentioned in your written submission the resilience councils program, which
WALGA has been funded for by the Commonwealth National Disaster
45 Resilience Program. I wondered if you might be able to tell us a little bit more
about that program.

MR SLOAN: I might actually ask Mr Batty to talk us through
that, if that's okay.

MR BATTY: Thank you, Nick. Certainly, Chair. The context for this, I think, can be found initially in the Emergency Preparedness Report of last year of the State Emergency Management Committee, which states that, and I quote:

Climate change modelling has consistently pointed to the facts that natural hazards are becoming more intense, less predictable, and that extreme events are becoming more frequent. The only responsible option, when confronted with both this inevitability and foreseeability, is to act.

End quote. Our members, elected members and, indeed, staff from across local government have repeatedly identified the need for assistance with undertaking the extensive comprehensive climate change, adaptation and resilience planning. This need is also reflected in the WALGA climate change policy statement, as endorsed by State Council in July of last year. And a key part of planning for the impacts of climate change at the local level is to ensure that these considerations are embedded in local governments' decision-making and governance arrangements. For example, effectively responding to the more frequent and extreme natural disasters that are expected to occur requires that this is adequately incorporated into emergency management plans, asset management plans, community development plans, and so forth.

There are currently no programs or resources at a State government level to assist local governments in this area. To date, WALGA has assisted the sector primarily through the provision of policy advice and related information and guidance, development of templates and tools and advocacy, and lobbying on behalf of the sector. We did identify the potential for using natural disaster resilience program funding to assist and build the sector's capacity in this area. By undertaking a project similar to those that have been delivered in other states, such as the Climate Resilient Councils Programs in Queensland, administered by the Local Government Association of Queensland with funding and technical support from the Queensland State Government.

We applied to the Natural Disaster Resilience Program, proposing to run a project entitled Climate Resilient Councils, preparing for the impacts of climate change. And we sought and received financial in-kind support for the proposed project from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Local Governments Insurance Service, with these parties to be project partners. We were advised 26 June that our application was successful. The aim of the project is to assist local governments to prepare for the increased incidence and severity of natural disasters as a result of climate change, and to do this, the project will:

one, through a desktop governance assessment, provide an evidence base of the extent to which climate change in disaster management are currently embedded in the decision-making and governance documents of all Western Australian local governments. This includes identifying gaps, barriers and opportunities to incorporate climate change adaptation into local government decision-making.

Following on from that, the findings will inform State government and WALGA initiatives to support the capacity of local governments to better adapt to climate change in disaster mitigation preparedness practices. There will be a number of workshops run to distribute the individual findings, the gaps-related analysis and a What Next phase, and we will produce targeted guidance materials for the members. The project commenced on 22 June and will be concluded December next year. Some of the information that will be provided through this assessment process will help to inform the development of the State's climate change policy, and we look forward to engaging with the State Government as that process evolves. Thank you.

DR JOYCE: Thank you very much, that's very helpful. In your submissions to the Inquiry, you also mentioned the importance of heatwaves, and particularly the urban heat island effect. Could you explain what that is and how local governments might design the influence of the urban environment to counter the heat island effect?

MR BATTY: Mark Batty, I'll kick off. So the urban heat island effect is a difference in air temperature between cities and its built form and the surrounding rural regions, and is created by a concentration of heat absorbing building materials that trap heat during the day and release it more slowly at night than the natural vegetation. Perth's tree canopy cover in 2016 was 20 per cent, and 85 per cent of that canopy is on private land. Many local governments have or are developing urban forest strategies to address the declining canopy cover, and these are often focused on building awareness in the community of the issue, and addressing canopy loss on public lands, typically local government lands.

Local governments could also use their planning frameworks to address tree loss on private land; however, these have proved relatively ineffective to date, as there is limited guidance from the State Government on how to achieve this in a consistent manner. Recent changes to the State planning framework Design WA suite of documentation does provide a greater focus on retention and space for new trees, and we welcome that development. Local governments can counter the urban heat island effect on the land they control – road reserves, parks and gardens – through additional tree planting, but space in these area is limited and cannot replace the loss being experienced on private land.

In assisting the sector in this regard, we have set up an urban forest working group. The purpose of the urban forest working group is to build the capacity

in local government to identify gaps, and develop practical outcomes and tools for local governments to uptake in the management of their urban forest. The group operates, essentially, as a community of practice for members to share their experiences, take collective action and responsibility for progressing agreed priority issues, and has a particular focus on measurement and monitoring of the urban forest canopy, community engagement and awareness, identifying research needs, priorities and possible funding pathways, working with the State to implement changes to statutory and strategic planning documents and associated guidance, the development of model templates, guides and tools, and tree management, including tree selection, soil volume and a range of other technical aspects for the urban forest.

We are also potentially going to make a submission to the State government, subject to State Council endorsement, in our pre-budget submission of an investment of \$30 million over four years to assist in building firstly, a State urban forest strategy, so the overarching strategy. That should include a comprehensive planning policy framework and mechanisms for the retention and planting of trees, a community education program, a competitive grants program to match local governments' already considerable investment in delivering urban forests, and importantly, investment in urban tree canopy data and measurements. As mentioned, that will be subject to the endorsement of State Council. Thank you.

DR JOYCE: Thank you very much.

MS BURGES: I was just going to refer to a piece that was just to reiterate in our submission, regarding that research that was undertaken by Monash University, that suggests for Perth over two consecutive days, with an average temperature of 44 degrees Celsius, heat related mortality may increase by 30 per cent. However, this rate can reduce by 20 per cent through reducing air temperature by one to two degrees. And in this context, the State Planning and Environmental Regulation Policy require due regard to be given to the retention of native vegetation, and design of green public spaces that improve urban amenity and reduce the heat island effect.

DR JOYCE: Those statistics are quite striking, aren't they?

MS BURGES: It's quite shocking, isn't it?

DR JOYCE: Yes.

MS BURGES: Yes.

DR JOYCE: We've just got under 10 minutes to go, so I might ask a question that I haven't provided you previously, if that's okay. But I noticed, looking on your website, you have a local government project map. And it's quite evident from that that local governments have been

actively engaged in climate adaptation and mitigation activities for a number of years. I wondered if you'd like to take this opportunity just to talk about some of the initiatives that have been particularly successful across your members?

5 MS BURGESS: Mr Batty?

MR BATTY: Mark Batty. There's been a range of initiatives over, probably, the last two decades in relation to both adaptation and mitigation. In terms of mitigation, a number of... certainly the metropolitan local governments, probably about 40 all up from memory, participated in a program called Cities for Climate Protection, which was funded under the Howard Government at the federal level. And what that program did was encourage local governments to undertake an energy audit, so looking at their energy expenditure for all their facilities, from civic centres to swimming pools to community centres and so forth. Once that has been done, they have a baseline set of information, they then set a reduction goal that gets endorsed by their local government. And then they prioritise a suite of actions to implement the range of measures that will reduce both that expenditure and their carbon footprint, and then they monitor and go again, so it's a continuous cycle.

That program ran for approximately 10 years, but there's been nothing suitable, really, to replace it. But what it did do is set local governments on the path to mitigation and a deeper understanding of both their energy use and expenditure, but also the business case towards reducing their carbon footprint, as well as the costs of running those facilities. Individual local governments have undertaken a range of activities, as you identified, Chair, through the project map. Some of those are relating to coastal adaptation work, in relation to climate change. And there's a significant amount of work that's happening in that space. We look forward to working with the State government and the Commonwealth to look at those issues and resolve those issues.

In the area of water, again, local governments have been at the forefront of water efficiency, realising that water is a precious resource, particularly potable water. And similar programs have been in place, both preceding and including the Water Corporation's Waterwise Councils Program. So the degree of literacy for local governments in relation to energy and water use in relation to climate change, is reasonably well advanced, which is pleasing. The future is tied, largely, in a strong partnership relationship with the State government on a lot of these issues, above and beyond the project map, so we have a good working relationship with the Climate Unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. We knowledge share, we strategise on what programs could benefit local government in relation to climate change, adaptation and mitigation. And as I flagged earlier, we will be making a number of recommendations to State government on the climate change raft of issues through our pre-budget submission. Thank you.

MS BURGES: In addition to that – Joanne Burges – in addition to that, the bushfire risk management program that I referred to earlier, it's when local governments act as the actual custodians of those plans. And the significant investment that's been made in that that we, as an association, 5 advocated for on behalf of our local governments, for an expansion of that program, has been successful. And with the completion of those plans, what it does do is make local governments eligible for funding through the State Mitigation Activity Fund, and it incentivises them to participate and access that 10 funding to treat risks in their community, along with other agencies and organisations responsible for that identified risk. So bringing it right back to that subsidiarity level of knowing your community and knowing what the risks are, and addressing those. So I would have to give you the actual figures for the amount of local governments that are participating in that, but it's been a significant shift in recent times, through the investment of State government 15 funds into that.

DR JOYCE: Thank you. Would you like to make any further comments before we close?

MR SLOAN: Look, I'll just... and just to finish off. We absolutely accept that managing the impact of climate change is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. And I think some of the initiatives, some of the work that we've described, that local government's been 20 involved in so far, demonstrates that local government takes its responsibility in this sphere very seriously. What we would say is, we are very mindful that of the three levels of government, local government is most sensitive to policy changes that have resource implications. And we think we're having quite 25 mature discussions with both levels of government, particularly State government at the moment, around the resource challenges that do face the sector. So we welcome the ongoing engagement, obviously, with the State. We think it's critical that planning for the impacts of climate change be embedded into policy development and decision-making across, obviously, 30 both State and Commonwealth levels. But we certainly welcome the opportunity to continue to be part of those discussions.

DR JOYCE: Thank you very much. And we obviously appreciate your contributions today throughout the Inquiry process and then going forward, so thank you very much. We'll close it there. So thank you for 35 your attendance at today's hearing. A transcript of this hearing will be sent to you so 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 40 to your submission to the Inquiry when you return the transcript, noting, of course, that it was already a very comprehensive submission. Once again, thank you very much for your evidence today. Thank you. 45

MR SLOAN: Thanks very much.

MS BURGESS: Thank you.

5 HEARING CONCLUDED

