

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.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

Submission to the Climate Health WA Inquiry

Terms of Reference 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.

1. As with all health problems, primary prevention should be our top priority. In the case of climate change, this means climate change mitigation to avoid potentially unmanageable health impacts. Climate change adaptation is a form of secondary prevention, addressing potential health impacts from unavoidable climate change.

2. In responding to the health impacts of climate change, it is essential that governments, industry and communities have access to information about the current situation with respect to health and climate change, and anticipated future trends, that are relevant to their decision-making contexts.

3. The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) provides a useful model for building research capacity and developing knowledge that is relevant to decision-making <https://www.nccarf.edu.au/>

4. The Human Health and Social Impacts of Climate Change Node at the University of Sydney provides another model for consideration. The Node receives financial support for the NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment and the NSW Ministry of Health. Funding is used to build research capacity; seed

Submissions response field

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fund transdisciplinary research projects; foster engagement between researchers and government, industry and community stakeholders; and leverage third-party research funding from sources such as the National Health and Medical Research Council. More information is available here <https://sydney.edu.au/medicine-health/our-research/research-centres/climate-change-human-health-and-social-impacts-node.html>

5. Specifically, there is a pressing need for 'transdisciplinary' research. This means research that transcends academic disciplines and values the know-how of policymakers, practitioners and communities—including Indigenous knowledge.

6. Effective transdisciplinary collaboration requires a commitment to co-design of research projects and co-production of knowledge. More information about this approach is available from the Future Earth website <https://futureearth.org/2014/07/23/contemplating-co-production/>

7. The current NHMRC corporate plan (2018-2019) identifies Resilience to environmental change, emerging health threats and emergencies as a strategic research priority. More information here <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/nhmrc-corporate-plan-2018-2019>

8. The December 2018 issue of the open-access journal Public Health Research & Practice is a themed issue about climate change and health. For convenience, a copy of the editorial is attached. More information here <http://www.phrp.com.au/issues/december-2018-volume-28-issue-4/>

Attachments

The following documents were provided as attachments to the submission

- Capon, A. & Corvalan, C. (2018). Climate change and health: global issue, local responses. *Public Health Research & Practice* 28(4): e2841823

Please complete this sheet and submit with any attachments to: Climate Health WA Inquiry

29 August 2019

The Project Director
Climate Health WA Inquiry
Public and Aboriginal Health Division PO Box 8172
Perth Business Centre WA 6849

To whom it may concern,

Climate Health WA Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the current Chief Health Officer inquiry into health and climate change in Western Australia.

For context, I am an Australian trained public health physician with a 30 year career spanning research, education, policy and practice. I have worked on health and climate change for more than 15 years, initially in collaboration with the late Professor Tony McMichael at Australian National University, subsequently as Director, International Institute for Global Health at United Nations University, and currently as Professor of Planetary Health in the School of Public Health here at the University of Sydney. During 2009-2011, I was founding convener of the NCCARF-funded Climate Change Adaptation Research Network for Human Health in Australia. Currently, I direct the AdaptNSW Human Health and Social Impacts Node, which is jointly funded by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment and the NSW Ministry of Health.

Climate change affects health directly through changes in the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme heat events, floods, droughts and storms, and indirectly through adverse changes in air pollution, the spread of disease vectors, food insecurity and undernutrition, displacement and mental ill health. Internationally, climate change is now mainstream in health discourse. Research on health impacts of climate change suggests that health gains achieved over the past half century are being undermined by climate change. Given this—and the health co-benefits that accrue from actions for a sustainable economy—the 2015 *Lancet* Commission on Health and Climate Change concluded that tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of this century.

Health offers a valuable perspective on climate change for three important reasons. First, it makes the case for action on climate change more urgent because human health is already being adversely affected by extreme weather events that are being amplified in frequency, intensity and duration by climate change. Second, it makes the case for action on climate change more personal because there are compelling human stories to tell about the loss of lives and livelihoods attributable to climate change. Third, there is a positive story to tell about the co-benefits for health from action on climate change, including substantial health improvements from reduced air pollution energy generation and other sources.

In the attached submission, I have specifically addressed ToR (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.* Please let me know if you would like further information.

Yours sincerely,



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Professor of Planetary Health
Director, Planetary Health Platform