

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.

First name	Stephanie
Surname	Godrich
Address	[REDACTED]
Phone	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]

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).

Focus on food security and ECU program of work in this area

Food security – definition, challenges, strengths, opportunities or initiatives relevant to WA

- Food security occurs “when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life.”¹ A lack of food security (food insecurity) can contribute to a range of negative health outcomes, including behavioural issues, nutrient deficiencies and obesity^{2, 3}.
- WA is unique, with much of its population residing in urban areas⁴. Beyond metropolitan areas, rural and remote locations experience poorer food availability, variety, quality and higher food cost⁴. Inequitable health service provision, a lack of collaboration, limited cooking and nutrition knowledge are other challenges⁵. Particularly vulnerable groups to food insecurity include children. Previous WA data reported 20% of children living in rural and remote areas were food insecure⁶. Migrants, people with unstable employment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and young people are other identified groups at higher risk of food insecurity⁷.
- With increasing climate change, changes in rainfall, droughts and extreme weather events will be experienced more frequently⁸. This will greatly impact food availability and access for people living in remote communities, by means of road closures, crop destruction, decreased yields and further

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transportation issues. Further, long distance food freight contributes to Greenhouse Gas Emissions. There are clear inequities relating to food availability and access in WA, with food insecurity impacting vulnerable groups. Urgent action is required to address this complex social policy problem. This call for action aligns with the Sustainable Health Review focus on reducing inequity in health outcomes and access to care.

- Literature has argued that complex problems (such as low food security) will be more effectively addressed through a place-based focus and by transitioning current systems using a co-designed manner. The South West Food Community pilot project used an Australian-first Systemic Innovation Lab approach⁹ in the South West region of WA. The approach included Form, Explore, Map, Learn, Address, Share (FEMLAS) stages⁹. Interviews were conducted with consenting participants (n=51) from government and community based programs working to support healthy food availability, access and use. Initiatives (n=52) were evaluated against 36 system change characteristics (within nine focus areas). A transition card displayed the evaluated initiative characteristics on the x-axis and participating initiatives on the y-axis. Key “windows of opportunity” across the system existed government-community interface focus areas; both unplanned exploration and planned exploitation of community knowledge in government policy. Other key gaps related to use of common language, branding, role models for change and combining resources. Individual initiative action plans were co-designed with initiative teams/leaders in an action planning session in December 2018. Participants were supported to address windows of opportunity through the facilitated action planning session and a purpose designed advocacy training course (The Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA’s ‘Pathway to Policy: Food Community’). Recent evaluation of the project (publication forthcoming) revealed government and community participants have both changed their practice in these and other gap areas, resulting in a shift of the food security system. This shift in the system can result in a more effective way to increase healthy food availability, access and use. This groundbreaking research presents a unique opportunity to improve community-level food security in rural and remote areas, where many of the populations most vulnerable to food insecurity reside, and is a scalable model for all other WA regions, Australian states and territories. This approach could support community-level food security and strengthen communities’ resilience against the food-related impacts of climate change. For further information see Godrich, S.L., Payet, J., Brealey, D., Edmunds, M., Stoneham, M., Devine, A. (2019). South West Food Community: A place-based pilot study to understand the food security system. *Nutrients – Nutrition and Vulnerable Groups special issue*. 11(4), 1-12. doi:10.3390/nu10111603. (Further publications forthcoming) and see attachment 1 letter of support from the DOH Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate.

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- The Regionally-grown fresh fruit and vegetable study has been piloted in South West WA and rural Tasmania. Consumers were asked perceptions on the importance of accessing and consuming regionally-grown produce, barriers and enablers for doing so. Results indicated consumers purchased regionally-grown produce to support their community and farmers and they believed quality was superior. Barriers included budgetary issues, seasonal availability of produce and transport issues. These issues could be overcome by strengthening local food systems and increased consumer education strategies for utilising seasonal produce. (Publications forthcoming and further research exploring solutions from food industry actor perspectives pending).

Edith Cowan University's contribution following the Inquiry

- Edith Cowan University is leading the South West Food Community project, which will be scaled up across other interested WA regions (and potentially states and territories) over the coming years. The university has also embedded this approach into teaching within undergraduate and postgraduate Bachelor of Health Science, Master of Public Health and Master of Nutrition and Dietetics courses across Joondalup and South West campuses and online. The university endeavours to continue this information dissemination and upskilling of its students to utilise novel approaches such as this Systemic Innovation Lab, in addressing complex problems.
- This approach aligns with the Sustainable Health Review recommendation to build capability in workforce planning and “partner with universities to develop health and social care workforce of the future”.

Recommendations for the WA Department of Health:

- Fund the statewide scale up of the Food Community project to other WA regions, to support enhanced community-level food availability, access and use.
- Focus on local food systems in rural communities through local food procurement in government owned facilities such as hospitals, schools and, where feasible, community stores. Where local food supply is not feasible, consider subsidised food transport, taking learnings from models such as the [Ngaanyatjarra Agency & Transport Services \(NATS\)](#)
- Consider scaling up economic, education and food supply interventions in remote communities such as [Food Ladder](#), where communities are supportive.
- Work collaboratively with Edith Cowan University to embed workforce development skills focusing on approaches to address complex social policy problems, such as through the use of a Systemic Innovation Lab methodology.

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- Work with relevant departments to increase promotion of 'buy local' campaigns to enhance consumer awareness of what is grown locally and seasonally and where it can be purchased.
- Work with relevant departments to offer financial support to rural and remote communities to facilitate a suite of local-level interventions that facilitate local food production, supply and use. This will aid time-poor, grass roots community led projects that are in need of financial support to increase sustainability of their work and will foster resilience which is a critical part of community food security.
- Support Local Government Authorities to prioritise local food availability and access in their Public Health Plans.

References:

1. Committee on World Food Security, editor Coming to terms with terminology: food security, nutrition security, food security and nutrition, food and nutrition security. Thirty-ninth session; 2012; Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organisation.
2. Jyoti DF, Frongillo EA, Jones SJ. Food Insecurity Affects School Children's Academic Performance, Weight Gain, and Social Skills. *Journal of Nutrition*. 2005;135(12):2831-9.
3. Burns C. A Review of the Literature Describing the Link Between Poverty, Food Insecurity and Obesity with Specific Reference to Australia. Melbourne, Australia Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research, Deakin University; 2004.
4. Pollard C, Landrigan T, Ellies P, Kerr D, Lester M, Goodchild S. Geographic Factors as Determinants of Food Security: A Western Australian Food Pricing and Quality Study. *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2014;23(4):703-13.
5. Godrich SL, Davies, C.R., Darby, J., Devine, A.,. What are the determinants of food security among regional and remote Western Australian children? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2017;41(2):172-7.
6. Godrich SL, Lo, J., Davies, C.R., Darby, J., Devine, A. Prevalence and socio-demographic predictors of food insecurity among regional and remote Western Australian children. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2017;41(6):585-90.
7. McKay FH, Haines BC, Dunn M. Measuring and Understanding Food Insecurity in Australia: A Systematic Review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. 2019;16(3):476.
8. Nations FaAOotU. Climate change and food security: a framework document. Rome: Italy; 2008.
9. Zivkovic S. Systemic Innovation Labs: A lab for wicked problems. *Social Enterprise Journal*. 2018;14(3):348-66.

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Attachment 1: Department of Health Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate support for Food Community

Letter was provided to the Inquiry team (unpublished).

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