

Personal Submission – Climate Health WA Inquiry

Note - The comments provided below are the personal opinions of officer and do not reflect the views of the City of Kwinana.

Introduction

Climate Change, global warming and sea level rise are taking place globally at an unprecedented rate and there are numerous sources of scientific data to support the change and the fact that carbon emissions from human activity are a significant contributor.

The changing climate brings with it more extreme weather and natural disasters, which in turn result in an increased loss of life, property and livelihoods, droughts, disease incidence and vectors, food shortages, famine and housing shortages.

Response Capacity and Recommendation in relation to Emergency Management

It is felt that WA is relatively well prepared and resourced to manage emergency situations through legislation, a working framework, regular meetings and updates, training, drills and funds allocated to manage resourcing for emergency management. An area in this regard that could be given further consideration is opportunities/support for front-line emergency management staff and recovery coordinators in the metropolitan area to volunteer and train under more experienced individuals during natural disaster situations. This provides practical experience in handling the stress of an emergency event.

Using the Principles of the Public Health Act

The supporting principles in the *Public Health Act 2016*, especially for the purpose of supporting Climate Change mitigation are rightly:

1. Sustainability
2. Precautionary
3. Proportionality (Risk)
4. Intergenerational Equity
5. Local Government Functions

At the heart of these principles is that of proportionality or risk management.

Historically, health agencies have done an excellent job of preserving human health and a level of precaution needs to continue to be maintained. However, it is felt that on occasion and in some situations overly cautious restrictions can impede initiatives that attempt to mitigate carbon emissions and therefore climate change.

An example of this is the restrictions in place on the re-use of construction and demolition (C&D) waste for road base. Recyclers and developers struggle to re-use recycled materials in part, as they could possibly be contaminated with minor amounts of asbestos fibres. It is felt that a slackening of restrictions would benefit greatly, while the risks of asbestos harm for workers could be managed through policy and training.

Another example is the unnecessarily onerous process of applying for a greywater system application. Greywater systems are a great way of saving water. However, while the use of the systems is under-used, potential applicants need to go through a lengthy process to have their system approved. With promotion of the benefits and safe practices, it is felt that an application process could be avoided altogether.

Application of Public Health Act Principles by Local Government

An example of how local governments can apply the same principles is the need to consider examples such as promoting the benefits of home-based egg production through keeping of poultry versus the paltry instances of nuisance related issues.

Risk management framework and tools

To support effective decision-making and proportionality in health legislation and enforcement, training in risk management needs to be considered. This needs to be preceded by an effective risk management framework that clearly stipulates the consequences and likelihood for each category and is effectively communicated to all stakeholders for (wherever possible,) consistent application.

Role of State Health in improving and advocating for sustainable practices

Another area of input and legacy should be that of Policy and support of Policy that attempts mitigates the impact of climate change. Examples of these include –

- Setting an example by introducing sustainable practices and procurement
- Compulsory recycling requirements in the Events Regulations
- Avoiding the urban sprawl
- Sustainable home design
- Tree retention in new development areas
- Transport oriented development
- Recycling of water
- Sustainable food production
- Sustainable diets
- Local hubs that discourage the need to travel
- Improved public transport solutions

Final word

The Chief Health Officer led Climate Health Inquiry is commended and the anticipated changes in approach by State Government are a positive step to climate change mitigation and preparedness. It is hoped that this submission provides value to the process.

Sincerely

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