

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The following information will not be published without your permission but enables the Inquiry to contact you about your submission if required.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

The only effective program of work by the Health Department will be a wholesale revamping of the organisation in line with a paradigm shift away from a business-as-usual, growth oriented paradigm to one which is premised on a limits to growth understanding of our planetary boundaries (Meadows, Randers, & Meadows, 2005). In undertaking this work, the department acts as a role model for legislators and other government institutions.

If everyone on the planet used resources in the way we currently do in Australia, then we would need five planet Earth's to sustain this level of extraction of natural resources and dumping of waste/pollution. Earth Overshoot Day moves steadily forward each year and is just one indicator that the dominant paradigm within Western capitalist societies is unsustainable by any measure (Wackernagel et al., 2004).

This inquiry seems premised on the idea that climate change is going to impact on aspects of human (and non-human) life in a way that we can prepare for, and adapt to. This is a ludicrous proposition. The climate across the planet has already changed, leading to an increase in extreme weather events such as heatwaves, floods, bushfires and hurricanes which bring with them loss of life, dislocation and unimaginable suffering for humans and other species. The elements which are contributing to global warming and therefore climate change (carbon in the atmosphere, human population, human consumption, human waste) are all increasing exponentially, and so this cannot be treated like any other single disaster event, ie. respond and restore to a semblance of what was before. The planet will continue to heat and the effects of this will continue to impact severely on all species, also exponentially, until there is substantial overshoot and collapse (Randers, 2008) or a radical shift in how we understand and work toward sustainability (extracting natural resources at a replacement rate and dumping waste at the rate of safe

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absorption) (Atkisson, 2011).

We are already experiencing the ecological consequences of climate change and it is not unreasonable to assume that the current social, political and economic volatilities being experienced across the globe are direct consequences of the human species reaching our limits to growth with a spectacular lack of insight and preparedness.

References:

Atkisson, A. (2011). *Believing Cassandra: How to be an optimist in a pessimist's world* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Earthscan.

Meadows, D., Randers, J., & Meadows, D. (2005). *Limits to growth: The 30-year update*. London, UK: Earthscan.

Randers, J. (2008). Global collapse - fact or fiction? *Futures*, 40, 853-864.

Wackernagel, M., Monfreda, C., Schulz, N., Erb, K., Haberl, H., & Krausmann, F. (2004). Calculating national and global ecological footprint time series:

Resolving conceptual challenges. *Land Use Policy*, 21(3), 271-278.

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