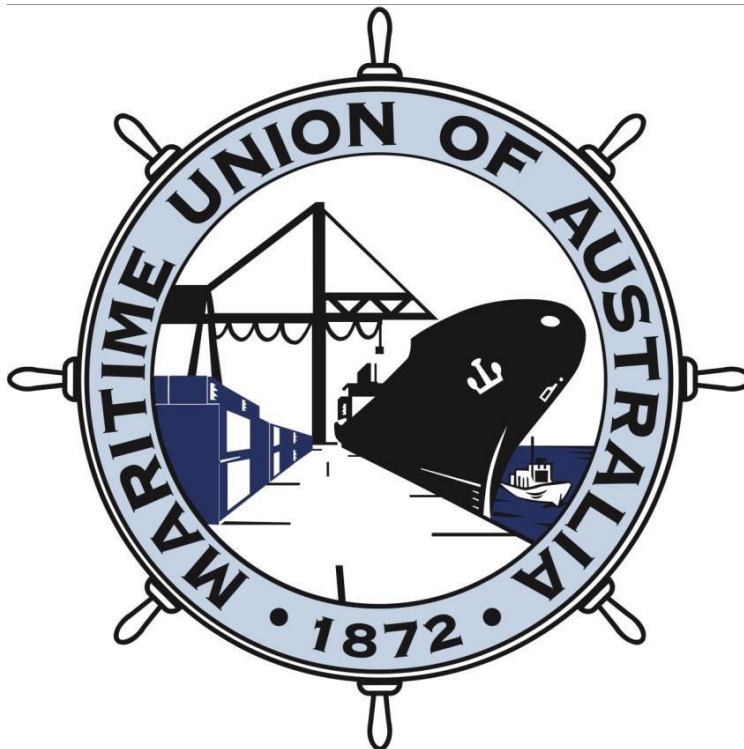


MUA Submission:
Climate Health WA Inquiry



6 September 2019

WA Health

Submitted by email: [REDACTED]

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Introduction

This submission has been prepared by Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). The MUA is a Division of the 120,000-member Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union and an affiliate of the 20-million-member International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The MUA represents approximately 14,000 workers in the shipping, offshore oil and gas, stevedoring, port services and commercial diving sectors of the Australian maritime industry. The MUA has about 4,000 members in West Australia working in ports along the coast, and offshore.

Extreme heat

The MUA has many members working in exposed conditions in north-western WA, around ports such as Port Hedland, Dampier, Broome and Karratha. Our members often work 12-hour shifts outdoors. Many work on rosters away from home which means they have many consecutive days of work.

Many of our members are already exposed to periods of extreme heat in their work, and average temperatures across Western Australia are forecast to increase as a result of climate change. More hot days and warm spells are projected with *very high confidence*.¹

Our union is well-organised, with good Enterprise Agreements and trained Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) in place across most workplaces. As a result, our members generally have access to sufficient break time, rest time and shade time on hot days. However, we work in a hostile political environment where the rights of unions to organise and for delegates and HSRs to represent members is constantly under attack. Union rights are essential to allowing workers to be able to cope with increasingly hot weather, and this should be recognised in any strategy to strengthen the preparedness and resilience of communities against extreme weather events.

Our members work alongside workers in industries that do not have the same strength of union protection and agreements. These workers are frequently not allowed sufficient break time in hot weather, and told to just have a powerade and keep going. This can have significant health implications. Rosters where workers work three or four weeks consecutively before they have a one week break can lead to significant fatigue and stress, especially in combination with extreme heat.

¹ CSIRO, Climate Change in Australia – Projections for Australia's NRM regions, <https://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/climate-projections/future-climate/regional-climate-change-explorer/sub-clusters/?current=RLNC&tooltip=true&popup=true>

Lack of planning and support for a just transition

MUA members are aware of the need to transition to a low carbon economy. Our union supports action to address the climate crisis. However, the lack of a comprehensive plan to reduce emissions and to ensure a just transition is deeply concerning. Many of our members work in short term contracts in the resource industry which is subject to boom and bust cycles. Unemployment takes a significant toll on people's mental health, not to mention their physical health and the livelihood of their families.

A program of work to manage the implications of climate change for health in WA must include the imperative of a properly planned and managed just transition, including attention to ensuring good employment outcomes. The MUA advocates for government to start taking action now to build the low emissions energy, transport and manufacturing systems we need. For example, waters off Perth have been identified as a potential location for offshore wind turbines to be constructed to provide renewable energy for West Australia.

A just transition must include the following measures:

1. **Maximising local jobs.** Detailed procurement plans must be developed for the sourcing of materials and equipment that maximise Australian production capacity and potential production capacity.
2. **Ensuring good union jobs.** The government should ensure that procurement rules with good employment conditions, union agreements and responsible contracting policies are in place across the industry.
3. **A job guarantee and no forced redundancies** for workers from fossil fuel industries, allowing for direct transition into employment in low emission industries. In conjunction with the relevant unions, examine how the German job guarantee model could be implemented in Australia.²
4. **Carry out a detailed skills and training assessment** and ensure local training providers are in place and appropriate training is funded to ensure the workforce is prepared. Training should be provided through local TAFEs rather than privately.
5. **Reducing inequality.** Ensure that low-emissions industries have apprenticeship programs in place with minimum ratios, and include recruitment of workers from disadvantaged backgrounds, including women and Aboriginal workers.
6. **Ensuring community engagement and development,** to ensure that local communities benefit in the broadest possible sense.
7. **Safety and Training.** Work with Safe Work Australia and relevant training agencies to develop safety codes of practice and qualifications for low emission industries at a national level. Establish industry training centres in TAFEs to ensure they are publicly accessible and accountable.

² Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment, *Final Report*, January 2019, see p.97-98 for details of the job guarantee scheme.