



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 Rural Clinical School of WA (RCSWA) educates medical students from all 3 WA universities during their penultimate year of medical training. We have 14 rural locations all across Western Australia, with a 15th site starting next year.

RCSWA is committed to reducing its own carbon footprint, but also continuing to educate our medical students, staff, colleagues within medical communities and patients on climate change and health impacts. Medical students receive education on climate and health in their core learning in the first and second years of their degree.

**Specifically in reference to number 3.**

**Identify and recommend a programme 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.**

Medical students as community educators:

We encourage our students to be active community members and also require them to take a role in advocacy and leadership throughout the year. Younger generations are often more aware of climate issues and are an ideal group to provide information to others. Students can complete a service learning project as part of their degree requirements during their RCS year.

RCSWA plans to engage students in service learning projects to prepare information for the community on climate change in general, the specifics of health impacts, or disaster mitigation advice (heatwave, fires, drought, thunderstorm asthma).

The students, with support of local medical educators or other medical practitioners, could deliver this information in a number of mediums to the general public during

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their year in the RCS site. Engaging with people through different forums, rather than healthcare, will increase attendance by a range of community members.

#### RSC staff as advocates at a local level:

As doctors in our local communities there is interest in multiple locations to provide ourselves as advocates on hospital committees, or GP networks, for climate and health. This would help promote healthcare being delivered in the most climate favourable way.

#### **Specifically in reference to number 4 and number 7.**

**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.**

**The role of the department of health in leading public policy on climate change and health.**

#### Hospital waste management:

1. Reduce hospitals contribution to landfill, and subsequent methane production, by composting non-hazardous biodegradable waste on site with already available maintenance and gardening staff managing this facility.
2. Stop using plastic single use items within WA health services. Use biodegradable options, or reusable options. This includes cutlery, cups used by staff, visitors and patients. Stop using single use, disposable suture equipment kits in emergency departments, return to items that are autoclaved.

#### Renewable energy:

HDWA could fund solar panels on hospitals, with dual supply via the current supplier to guarantee reliable power. Many businesses have adapted to part solar as a medium term, cost effective method, of using renewable energy. The capacity for addition of batteries will become a further cost saving as battery technology improves.

#### Leadership on public policy:

The climate crisis needs the medical community to view mitigation strategies as an overarching preventative health strategy. With this in mind it makes it clear that funding needs to be prioritised and allocated accordingly.

There are a number of relatively simple options to reduce health contributions to climate change as listed above. It requires leadership within the department of health at a high level, to allow smaller WA sites to carry forward these changes, and demonstrate commitment via actions. Public policy needs to promote multiagency and multinational cooperation, as many solutions are outside of the health sphere, and are within agriculture or technology and are progressing outside of Australia.

The RCSWA is delighted to be involved in this consultative process.

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