

Western Australia Election Briefing: Climate Change, Health and Wellbeing — Act Now

March 2021



Image: Ben Carlless

Acknowledgement and Commitment

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work and acknowledge that sovereignty of the land we call Australia has never been ceded. We commit to listening to and learning from First Nations people about how we can better reflect Indigenous ways of being and knowing in our work.



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Climate Change, Health and Wellbeing — Act Now

Western Australia (WA) is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is already experiencing damaging consequences of climate change. Rising temperatures, a decline in rainfall in the south-west and interior, lengthening fire seasons, and extreme weather events, such as cyclones and floods pose significant threats to human health.

It is welcome that the West Australian Government has recognised the threat of climate change to human health and taken steps towards integrated climate and health action.

The final reports from the Sustainable Health Review and the Climate and Health Inquiry have provided the Government with clear guidance for measures that will address climate and health impacts, strengthen resilience, and achieve positive health and environmental outcomes for WA.

The current WA Government has committed to implementing the recommendations from the Review and Inquiry. Implementation of these commitments should no longer be delayed. The following actions should be immediately implemented, with publicly available timelines for completion.

Action based on existing commitments

1. ESTABLISH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNIT BY MAY 2021

The key recommendation from the Climate and Health Inquiry is to act early and establish a Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) in the WA Department of Health. As documented by the Inquiry report, the evidence for the benefits of an SDU is clear, based on the experience of the UK SDU in the NHS. Over a 10 year period, the NHS achieved almost 20% emissions reductions and average annual savings of approximately £90 million pounds (~AU\$ 160 million) through environmental sustainability measures.¹

In order to avoid further delays, we recommend that establishment of the Unit commence immediately, with recruitment for staff position(s) undertaken in April and the SDU beginning its work in May 2021. This should commence with the development of a publicly available operational plan with timelines and milestones to enact the recommendations of the Climate and Health Inquiry.

2. DEVELOP A CLIMATE AND HEALTH MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION PLAN FOR WA

A recommendation from the Sustainable Health Review Final Report was to 'ensure mitigation and adaptation strategies are in place to respond to the health impacts and risks of climate change; as well as set ongoing targets and measures aligned with established national and international goals'.

The WA Government should, as a matter of the highest priority, develop an integrated Climate and Health Plan, which addresses both mitigation and adaptation priorities identified in the WA Climate Health Inquiry report. To ensure alignment with national and international goals, the plan should be based on a target of an 80% emissions reduction by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2040 for the state.

3. REPORT ON HEALTH SYSTEM ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

The Sustainable Health Review called for action to reduce the health system's environmental footprint, and public reporting on the health systems environmental footprint by 2020, based on the UK model.²

The SDU should establish a process for public reporting of the health system's annual environmental footprint, including waste, energy and water usage, transport, use of medical devices and consumables, and emissions. The development of an annual carbon budget for the health sector should be used as a mechanism to ensure measurable progress towards achieving an 80% reduction by 2030, and net zero

1 Weeramanthri TS, Joyce S, Bowman F, Bangor-Jones R, Law C. Climate Health WA Inquiry: Final Report. Perth (WA): Department of Health, Government of Western Australia; 2020

2 Sustainable Health Review. (2019). Sustainable Health Review: Final Report to the Western Australian Government. Department of Health, Western Australia.

emissions by 2040. A 100% renewable electricity supply target for WA hospitals should be set for 2025 along with a commitment to no new gas installations or upgrades in WA hospitals from 2021.

This approach can be modelled on the UK carbon budgets, established under the Climate Change Act, and monitored by the Climate Change Committee, which provides detailed analysis and information to support net zero transitions in different sectors, and reports to Parliament on progress towards each sector's carbon budgets.³

4. COORDINATED ACTION IN POLICY, PROCUREMENT, PERFORMANCE, TRAINING AND RESEARCH

As noted in the WA Climate and Health Inquiry report, different Western Australian regions exhibit different environmental and health impacts from climate change. Both the Sustainable Health Review and the Climate and Health Inquiry recognise the importance of improving procurement. As part of the SDU's structure, a Systems Manager should be engaged to guide the revision of procurement processes based on circular economy criteria.

Action beyond existing commitments

The current Government has set the foundations for climate action. It is now crucial that the implementation of the commitments arising from the Sustainable Health Review, Climate and Health Inquiry, and state government Climate Policy, begin with concrete and publicly available operations plans and milestones.

1. BRING FORWARD ZERO CARBON TRANSITION PLANS TO 2040

Given the acceleration of climate trajectory and projections for Western Australia, it is now clear that the timeline for zero carbon transition by 2050 is too far in the future. In order to avert existential threats to West Australia's society, economy and human health, the zero 2050 target must be brought forward to 2040.

In the [West Australian Climate Policy](#), the State Government has committed to developing sectoral emissions reduction strategies to guide emissions reductions across key economic sectors. The transition targets should be brought forward to achieve an 80% reduction by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2040 for all sectors, including emissions from exports. This requires all state government agencies, including government trading entities, to develop and implement plans to transition to net zero. A timeline for completion of the transition plans by the different agencies and

3 Carbon budgets and targets. Climate Change Committee. UK.

government trading entities should be published and progress reported to Parliament annually. Again, the UK approach of annual sector carbon budgets provides a mechanism to achieve zero emission transitions.⁴

This is in line with other jurisdictions and institutions in Australia and around the world (eg. ACT commitments to bring forward its 2050 target; Tasmania’s commitment to 200% renewable energy by 2040; Macquarie⁵ and Santos⁶ commitments to net zero by 2040).

2. COMMIT TO NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS OF FOSSIL FUELS

To support zero carbon transition plans, West Australia must commit to not developing any new fossil fuels. Doing so would fundamentally undermine the intention and commitments made in the agreed to WA Climate Policy, and by Australia in the Paris Agreement

3. 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY BY 2030

Several research studies⁷ support the feasibility of WA moving to 90% renewable electricity by 2030, with a mix of wind power, rooftop solar and large scale solar. This is estimated to create over 8,600 jobs, and would help reduce energy costs for the state. This transition should be accelerated to realise the opportunities and imperative of the 2030 timeframe.

Signed by



4 Carbon budgets and targets. Climate Change Committee. UK.
5 <https://www.macquarie.com/au/en/about/news/2020/addressing-climate-change-and-accelerating-the-low-carbon-transition.html>
6 <https://www.santos.com/news/santos-to-be-net-zero-emissions-by-2040/>
7 90-100% Renewable Electricity for the South West Interconnected System of WA' (ANU, 2017)
Energy 2030 (Sustainable Energy Now, 2017)
Collie at the Crossroads – Planning a future beyond coal (Beyond Zero Emissions, 2019)



About the Climate and Health Alliance

The Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) is Australia's national peak body on climate change and health. Our mission is to build a powerful health sector movement for climate action and sustainable healthcare.

The membership of CAHA includes a broad cross-section of health sector stakeholders with 50+ member organisations, representing healthcare professionals from a range of disciplines, as well as healthcare service providers, institutions, academics, researchers, and consumers. Information about CAHA's membership and governance can be found at caha.org.au.

The Climate and Health Alliance has produced a significant number of reports and publications to assist policymakers and inform health stakeholders and the wider community understand the links between climate change and health, and to guide decisions regarding policy and solutions.

These include the Human Health and Wellbeing Adaptation Plan for Queensland; Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia and the preceding Discussion Paper; a Review of Health and Climate Change Literature for the City of Melbourne; a joint report on divestment Healthy Investments (with Doctors for the Environment); the seminal report Coal and Health in the Hunter: Lessons from One Valley for the World; a multi-stakeholder Joint Position Statement and Background Paper on Health and Energy Choices; a joint report 'Our Uncashed Dividend' (with The Climate Institute) on the health benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; Discussion Paper for the Roundtable on the Health Implications of Energy Policy and a subsequent Briefing Paper on the same topic.

CAHA has produced a film on the risks to health and climate from coal and gas, The Human Cost of Power; and has conducted many innovative and ground breaking public events, including a series of Greening the Healthcare Sector Forums, including several Healthcare Environmental Sustainability Forums with Western Health and Institute for Hospital Engineers Australia; the Our Climate Our Health Seminar, featuring an innovative thought experiment: Imagining 2030 as a healthy low carbon world; a Public Seminar on Protecting Health from Climate Change (with University of NSW); and a national Forum on Climate and Health: Research, Policy and Advocacy. CAHA also contributes to many conferences, community dialogues, and forums, both nationally and internationally on these issues.

For further information see caha.org.au