

29 November 2019

Climate Change Consultation  
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation  
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Dear Madam/Sir

## **CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES PAPER**

The Quinns Rocks Environmental Group is a local community group promoting conservation and sustainability. Formed in 1985 we engage the community, work with decision makers and take action on the groups to protect the environment.

Climate change is a critical issue and we offer the following comments on the Issues Paper provided for public consultation.

### **State Climate Policy and emissions reduction target**

We welcome the intention to develop a State Climate Policy. This should provide strategic direction for a whole of government response to climate change including substantive commitments to reduce emission and adapt and build resilience to climate change. We agree that a strong national policy on climate change is needed (p3) but has been lacking and this has hampered effective action. There is much that the state government and others can and should do.

The State Government should set and work towards emissions reduction targets. These could match or better Australia's commitment under the Paris Agreement. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting should accompany policy measures, to provide accountability for progressing action to reduce emissions and build resilience and support ongoing dialogue and activity around climate change response.

As the Issues Paper notes, climate change raises significant challenges for Western Australia and we are already experiencing significant impacts. There are also opportunities as we innovate and respond to a changing climate and change practices and develop technology. The paper says that "we don't need to choose between reducing emissions and protecting our State's economy and industries". Not reducing emissions will have economic, social and environmental implications including our contribution to global efforts for climate

protection, our reputation in the international community and positioning ourselves in a decarbonising world.

### **Transforming energy generation**

Further progress with decarbonising WA's electricity supply is supported. Renewables should provide a greater share of demand and use of fossil fuels should be phased out. Energy storage and decentralised energy systems can support this move. Energy efficiency needs attention too. The Collie community will be impacted by this change and a just transition with support to build job opportunities, e.g. in other energy sources.

### **Industry innovation**

Innovation across the economy to develop and adopt lower carbon and more sustainable practices should be supported. The Issues Paper says the carbon footprint of LNG is an opportunity for innovation. We are concerned about the large and growing emissions from LNG, including emissions from processing and distribution. Expanding LNG extraction and its use domestically or overseas is out of step with the need to significantly reduce emissions. The climate impact of the LNG sector needs greater scrutiny including in environmental assessments. Government support should focus on renewables as a sustainable energy source as we address the climate emergency. The Renewable Hydrogen Strategy is a positive step.

### **Future mobility**

Mobility technology is changing, raising risks and opportunities for addressing climate impacts. We welcome support for low emission vehicles. Walking, cycling and public transport should be prioritised in transport planning and investment - improving services and infrastructure, supportive land use and behaviour change programs should drive reduce dependence on private motorised travel. Expanding the urban road network and over-supply and under-pricing of car parking works against the goal of reducing transport emissions - better planning and investment decisions and parking management are needed.

### **Waste reduction**

Reducing waste and increasing reuse and resource recovery offers climate and other environmental benefits. Initiatives should continue to address waste generation across households and commercial and industrial sectors. Reducing material consumption is a fundamental need as we address climate change and other environmental challenges.

### **Safe and healthy communities**

As the Issues Paper notes, climate change is increasing the number and scale of extreme weather events impacting the community. For our local area challenges will likely include storm events, coastal erosion, bushfires and heat waves. Community awareness and dialogue about climate change and what it means for our local government area or suburb should be fostered. Volunteer service groups, e.g. State Emergency Service, should be supported to meet future challenges. Community development is important to build local resilience. Engagement in community groups, local support networks and building practical skills should be part of this. Transition Town and permaculture initiatives are positive examples of how this could be done.

## **Water security**

We agree that climate change will impact water resources and more careful management of these will be needed. With declining rainfall in south-western Australia more efficient water practices should be promoted. A conserver attitude towards water should be promoted, e.g. through media coverage, community events. Low water use appliances, waterwise landscaping (including promoting locally indigenous planting that offers biodiversity benefits too), greywater reuse and rainwater harvesting can be encouraged further, e.g. through incentives, education and behaviour change initiatives, demonstration projects. Water reuse can be expanded including aquifer recharge, irrigation of playing fields and potentially use in horticulture e.g. near the Alkimos Wastewater Treatment Plant.

## **Liveable town and cities**

As the Issues Paper says, built assets in our communities have long term effects on energy use. Urban design and building requirements should require a greater degree of energy and water efficiency e.g. insulation, passive heating and cooling, water harvesting, plumbing for greywater use. The Low Carbon CRC has provided guidance on ways to minimise emissions from the built environment. With climate change likely to increase temperatures in many WA communities, it is important that new residential, commercial and institutional buildings are designed appropriately. Retrofitting the existing building stock should be supported and would provide opportunity to create jobs, boost resilience and keep down operational costs. Urban forest initiatives being taken by local governments and communities should be supported. This should include protecting native vegetation as well as increasing canopy cover in existing suburbs. Better design of infill development is needed to protect and expand urban vegetation.

## **Resilient infrastructure and businesses**

Climate change will impact existing infrastructure and is a critical issue for the design of future infrastructure. Being a coastal community we are especially concerned about the impact of sea level rise and storm events on coastal ecosystems, parks and adjacent infrastructure. While a coastal hazard adaptation and risk management process has been undertaken locally, climate change poses issues for the community. Coastal erosion has been a recurring problem and significant investment has been made in coastal protection structures. Whether these will be sufficient to protect parks, roads and houses in the coastal zone in the longer term is unknown. State Planning Policy 2.6 addresses coastal planning, however recent sea level rise projections may current guidance inadequate. Local government and community capacity to adapt to change should be developed. Greater dialogue is needed about coastal retreat as a necessary response to sea level rise.

## **Protecting biodiversity**

Biodiversity declining is a critical issue that interacts with climate change. Living on Perth's northern urban fringe we are acutely aware of the continuing loss of bushland as the suburban footprint expands on the coastal plain. Clearing of bushland contributes to carbon emissions and climate change adds to pressure on natural ecosystems. Biodiversity needs greater attention including effective measures to stem habitat destruction and fragmentation and species loss. There is a lack of priority for conservation in public policy and planning decisions. The resourcing of state government environmental agencies and natural resource management projects is inadequate. Greater public investment is needed and biodiversity should be high on the government's agenda. A whole of government effort is needed to protect biodiversity in the south-west biodiversity hotspot which includes metropolitan Perth. Implementation of Bush Forever should be a key initiative here.

## **Strengthening adaptive capacity**

As argued above, building resilience and the capacity to adapt to a changing climate warrant attention. Awareness of climate change and how it should impact at the local scale should be promoted. Given rapid change and uncertainty about how this will play out, we should build networks and support adaptive action to respond. Monitoring, evaluation and review should be part of the process at state and local levels, involving stakeholders in understanding and responding to our emerging climate future. Education including climate and ecological literacy and awareness of social change processes should be part of this effort.

In summary, the Quinns Rocks Environmental Group sees climate change as a critical issue that needs committed action. The State Government can play a significant role in reducing emissions and adapting to change, and this can bring benefit to our community and economy as the world responds to a shifting climate. Locally we see threats to the coastal zone and biodiversity as major concerns. Community awareness and engagement is important to build resilience in the face of climatic challenges. Growing emissions from the state's LNG industry is a threat to the global climate and out of step with the direction needed in the current climate emergency. We look forward to seeing a state climate policy that targets a shift to net zero emissions and brings the community along in seeking a more sustainable future.

The Quinns Rocks Environmental Group is a member of the Conservation Council of Western Australia and the Urban Bushland Council. We commend their submissions on the Issues Paper.

Regards,

David Wake

For the Quinns Rocks Environmental Group Inc

