

Response to Recommendations

The table below outlines the response of the State Government to each of the report's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	COMMENT
1. That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that the wide range of co-benefits of climate action in schools is promoted in the Department of Education's frameworks, policies and initiatives, and that these co-benefits are given recognition by commensurate funding for sustainability initiatives.	Supported in principle	<p>The Department of Education's <i>Caring for Country Together - Our Sustainability Framework</i> provides a whole-of-agency approach to sustainability and emphasises the co-benefits of sustainability across three focus areas – curriculum, infrastructure and operations.</p> <p>Sustainability initiatives are funded in Western Australian Schools in a number of ways. Schools are provided with a one-line budget and can choose to allocate funding to sustainability initiatives if this is a school priority. Additionally, the School Clean Energy Technology Fund, a McGowan Government election commitment, is providing funding for schools to undertake a range of sustainability initiatives. The \$44.6 million fund will provide rooftop solar panels at 28 schools in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions and seven new virtual power plants at schools in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and the mid-west region, with the remaining funding available for schools to apply for to implement clean energy solutions.</p>
2. That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that funding is given to support schools to adopt the Sustainable Schools WA initiative as a whole-school planning framework for sustainability and responding to climate change. This should include professional development on implementing the framework and funding support for networks.	Noted	<p>The Department of Education's Sustainability Framework highlights the Sustainable Schools WA initiative as a key resource to support schools to implement the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability and respond appropriately to climate change.</p> <p>An Education Officer is funded to coordinate ongoing support to schools to adopt and implement Sustainable Schools WA. Current support includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of intranet content that supports all schools to develop locally-relevant sustainability action plans. • Dissemination of related resources to support this action-planning process. • Coordination of a Sustainable Schools WA (online) Connect community – where schools and partner organisations such as Millennium Kids and Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (Waterwise Schools) share resources and examples of good practice education for sustainability. • Consultancy and advice to schools, as requested. • Support for local networks. • Development and maintenance of the Department's Education Resources 'hub' for Sustainable Schools WA and related sustainability resources, including case studies (schools' videos) and connections to key organisations, for example the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and Perth Zoo. <p>Professional learning related to Sustainable Schools WA (sustainability cross-curriculum priority) is currently provided to schools through the Department's Teacher Development Schools initiative and widely promoted through the Department's communications channels.</p> <p>The Department will establish a 'bush classroom' as a demonstration site for schools – through physical visits and as an online showcase. This initiative will provide guidance to schools in engaging with the Department's Sustainability Framework.</p>
3. That the Minister for Education and Training commits to funding the Department's sustainability unit beyond its initial two years.	Noted	The recommendation is noted.
4. The Minister for Education and Training ensures that transport is included as an operational focus area in future revisions of the Department of Education's sustainability framework.	Noted	<p>Transport initiatives are integrated within the infrastructure focus area of the Department's Sustainability Framework due to links to schools planning processes.</p> <p>The following transport related initiatives are also being implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the Department's Primary School Design Brief and Secondary School Planning Guide to incorporate elements to encourage active transport. • The Primary School Brief now incorporates shelters over bicycle/scooter racks at new schools. • The Department has funded a 2-year fulltime 'Your Move' Project Officer position, working across both the Department of Education and the Department of Transport (DoT) to support 'Your Move' initiatives. • Joint planning is under way with the DoT to capture and progress school participation and further promote 'Your Move' within the Department of Education. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to formalise a collaborative approach and achieve cross-departmental capacity building in relation to the delivery of road safety education, driver licensing and active travel initiatives. • The Department contributes funding each year to DoT's Connect Schools Grant to enable schools to undertake projects that support active travel. • Electric vehicle charging stations to be included in school design briefs from 2024.

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<p>5. That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that the rollout of the sustainability framework is supported by clear and ongoing communication to schools about its priority, and comprehensive professional development for school staff.</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>The Department of Education is currently implementing a communications plan to support and promote the rollout of the Sustainability Framework across the organisation, and reinforce sustainability as a priority for the Department and schools. Actions already in progress include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular email communications to all principals, schools and the Department promoting sustainability activities and initiatives linked to the Framework. • Dedicated Department intranet content, including the Framework's 'roadmap' for schools and central services staff to assess current sustainability initiatives, understand where they currently are on the sustainability continuum and identify what they can do to move further along the continuum. • Online case studies and a video to demonstrate how our schools are 'Caring for Country' together. • Dedicated pages on the Department's public website to promote the Sustainability Framework. • Social media posts on the Department's Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram channels to promote sustainability initiatives. <p>The second phase of the communications plan is currently in development. This will further socialise the Framework, highlight its priority and promote professional development opportunities for school staff including administrators, teachers, education assistants and support staff such as gardeners and cleaners.</p>
<p>6. The Minister for Education and Training directs the Department of Education to annually review engagement with the <i>Caring for Country Together</i> framework, with specific reference to climate action, both at school level and within the central and regional offices of the Department.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The recommendation is noted.</p>
<p>7. The Minister for Education and Training directs the Department to consult with the Sustainable Schools Alliance and develop a system of incentives for sustainability initiatives in schools.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The recommendation is noted.</p>
<p>8. The Minister for Education and Training implements a sector-wide climate change impacts and adaption study, ideally as part of a state-wide process to address the current and projected impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The Department of Education recognises the need to identify and mitigate against these risks and has adopted the interim climate change risk management guide prepared by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and the WA Treasury Corporation and which provides guidance to government agencies in preparation of their own climate risk assessments. The anticipated outcome is the ability of agencies to identify potential risks and develop mitigation strategies to enhance resilience to climate change.</p>
<p>9. The Minister for Education and Training incorporates explicit reference to sustainability into school accountability documents and procedures, including the Principals' Professional Review, and Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement, and the Public School Review.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The recommendation is noted.</p>
<p>10. The Minister for Education and Training ensures additional funding for FTE allocation for a Sustainability Coordinator role in all schools.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>	<p>The Department of Education's view is that to achieve a culture of best practice and embed sustainability across curriculum, infrastructure and operations, sustainability must form part of all roles, and so an alternative approach is being implemented.</p> <p>The Department's Sustainability Framework roadmap outlines that implementation is everyone's responsibility and successful achievement requires unified action by staff, students and school communities. The roadmap provides guidance on how to do this – for example, in the classroom, teachers move across a continuum from current state to a future state of best practice embedded in everyday activities.</p> <p>Schools have discretion in how they deploy financial and human resources, as reflected in one line budget funding. They have the option to engage resources to coordinate sustainability activities. The Department will develop a Job Description Form for a Sustainability Coordinator to assist schools to establish this position should they so choose.</p>

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<p>11. The Minister for Education and Training ensures that the Department's Sustainability Unit and internal reference group formulate a plan to promote the benefits of climate action to school corporate services managers and facilitate training.</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>The Department of Education will work with the Sustainability Reference Group to develop a plan to promote the benefits of climate action to school managers corporate services (MCSs) and facilitate training.</p>
<p>12. The Minister for Education and Training ensures that schools are required to develop a sustainability policy that specifically identifies climate actions that are achievable and relevant to their unique school environment.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>	<p>An alternative approach will be implemented to address this recommendation. As a public sector organisation, the Department of Education aligns to the McGowan government's Western Australian Climate Policy and will make any consequential amendments to related policies, guidelines and procedures.</p> <p>At a school-level, this approach includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of tools and resources to help schools understand how to progress embedding sustainability and how to plan to achieve best practice, including the Sustainability Action Plan, driven by Sustainable Schools WA. • Investigation of an application-based tool to support schools and the wider Department for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the emissions avoided due to the implementation of sustainability initiatives/programs.
<p>13 That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that the Department's strategic approach to climate-friendly infrastructure and operations prioritises communities that are particularly vulnerable to climate change.</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>The Government supports the recommendation, and notes the Department of Education has commenced planning for a review of the Primary School Brief and Secondary School Planning Guide. This review will address themes such as climate change adaptation and mitigation.</p> <p>The Department is currently undertaking a Building Condition Assessment program across all public schools that will inform future upgrade, replacement and maintenance programs.</p>
<p>14. That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that the Department of Education incorporates benchmarks for resource consumption in schools and provides funding for schools to be audited to assist them to achieve these benchmarks.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p>	<p>The Department of Education recognises the value of benchmarking and target-setting for resource consumption in schools and is investigating ways to measure, monitor and evaluate the emissions avoided due to the implementation of sustainability initiatives/programs.</p>
<p>15. The Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning and the Treasurer adopt an agreed approach on prioritising the environmental performance of school buildings, in support of the WA government's net zero goals.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The Government notes engagement is already occurring across departments to ensure a coordinated approach to the Government's Climate Policy with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation playing a key role in coordinating the response.</p> <p>With the existing Strategic Asset Management Framework (SAMF) as the foundation for providing advice to the Government on prioritising, investing and managing public assets, Treasury will continue to provide guidance and support to agencies, including the Department of Education, with the preparation of asset investment business cases that seek to achieve the Government's social, environmental and fiscal goals.</p> <p>At an operational level, the government notes the following related activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage commenced a review of its operational policy related to school sites planning in 2019. This review was informed by a collaborative working group comprised of officers from the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Department of Education, Department of Finance, and Treasury. It is expected that Operational Policy 2.4 – Planning for School Sites will be jointly released shortly. Many of the new principles promoted within the revised policy including early engagement with the Department of Education on planning proposals and encouragement of innovative design, will assist in improving site selection and built form of primary and secondary schools. • The Office of the Government Architect (OGA) has also developed a suite of Design Standards for new public building projects to set objective provisions for design quality, including Design Standard 02 – The Design of Education Environments (DS02), which includes strategies that support climate change response. • State Planning Policy 7.0 - Design of the Built Environment includes performance-based design principles, which provide the means of evaluating the merit of proposed solutions by professionals with appropriate design expertise. • The State Government has funded the \$44.6 million Schools Clean Energy Technology package (SCETF) for the installation of new energy technologies in public schools, including more rooftop solar systems and Virtual Power Plants (VPPs) and implementing a range of energy efficiency measures (such as installation of LED lighting, improving the efficiency of rooms and appliances, use of smart meters and installation of 'intelligent' light management systems). • Reductions in energy requirements and emissions through the above, as well as the performance of measures currently implemented in schools, will be measured through the Department of Education and the results will provide a catalyst for schools to progress on their sustainability journey. • The Department of Education's review of design briefs for primary and secondary schools will investigate the formalisation of the highest possible accreditation of energy efficiency. • The Department of Education will consult with the OGA within the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on opportunities to improve sustainability outcomes in the design of school infrastructure.

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<p>16. That the Minister for Education and Training develops a proposal for an incentivised loan system for schools to implement energy infrastructure upgrades, similar to the Victorian Greener Government School Buildings program.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>	<p>The Government is taking an approach that delivers the intent of recommendation 16, without a loans system that commits schools to repay funds.</p> <p>The Department of Education has delivered a number of programs to assist schools with energy infrastructure at no cost to the school. These programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial Solar Schools program, which was funded as part of the State's \$200 million Maintenance Blitz for schools. This program is close to completion – a total of 30 schools have received solar PV infrastructure. • The Schools Virtual Power Plant (VPP) Pilot Project, which is also close to completion – 10 schools have VPPs installed. • An LED lighting replacement program, also funded by the Maintenance Blitz, replacing existing light fittings with new LED light fittings across 37 school sites (35 primary schools and 2 high schools), at a cost of \$1.86 million. <p>Further energy infrastructure upgrades are to be funded by the Schools Clean Energy Technology Fund (SCETF), which progresses the State Government's election commitment to the climate change agenda, totalling \$44.6 million over 4 years and commencing in 2021-22. The objective of the SCETF is to install clean energy solutions in Western Australian public schools to reduce energy costs and lower carbon emissions. The SCETF will deliver energy infrastructure at no cost to schools, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$35.2 million to assist schools, which have persistently high energy consumption costs, with new energy technologies and/or measures, such as installations of solar panels. • \$4.6 million for Horizon Power to install solar panels in a further 28 schools as part of the Solar Schools program (stage 2) across the Kimberley (18) and Pilbara (10) regions. • \$4.8 million for Synergy to extend the Schools VPP Pilot Project to an additional 7 schools in regional locations. <p>Schools receiving solar PV installations as part of the SCETF are expected to achieve significant savings on their energy bills. Each successful school will be visited and encouraged to devote 25% of these savings for the first 4 years to other sustainability initiatives. This will further leverage the benefits of funding to other sustainable initiatives.</p> <p>The Department has also commenced planning for a review of the Primary School Brief and Secondary School Planning Guide. The review will address themes such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, and transitioning to net zero emissions by 2050 across the asset lifecycle in accordance with the Western Australian Climate Policy.</p>
<p>17. That the Minister for Police directs the Children's Crossing and Road Safety Committee (Policy) to review the criteria for children's crossings warrants to ensure they support and enable active transport to school.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>	<p>The WA Police Force advise that given the already low approval thresholds, the large number of new crossings being opened, the significant infrastructure costs associated with crossings, and the difficulty in attracting sufficient Traffic Wardens, there is currently no intention from the WA Police Force to reduce or remove the current approval thresholds. The current approval thresholds are considered appropriate and fit for purpose to support and enable active transport to schools.</p>
<p>18. That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that investment in water efficient infrastructure in schools (especially retrofits) continues beyond the expiry of the current WA Recovery Plan-funded projects.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The Water Efficient Public Schools Program (WEPSP) was a \$1.5 million Water Corporation initiative from 2020–2022 to reduce demand for potable scheme water within schools. Participating schools, in total 76, were allocated between \$15,000 to \$30,000 to spend on water efficiency interventions. These ranged from simple replacement of existing plumbing fittings through to more significant retrofits of irrigation systems and hydro-zoning of turf areas.</p> <p>Although the operational component of the WEPSP concluded at the end of the 2021-22 financial year, the Water Corporation will continue to monitor all participating school sites for a further 2 years to measure potable water use and collate related longitudinal data. This data will be used to design new water saving and efficiency initiatives that will be applied to other potable water high use schools.</p> <p>The Department is aiming to achieve exemplar waterwise new schools from 2024 onwards through efficient irrigation systems and shallow aquifer recharge and waterwise fixtures and fittings.</p>
<p>19. That the Minister for Water amends the Water Services (Water Corporations Charges) Regulations 2014 so private schools benefit from the same price signals to drive water efficient behaviours as government schools.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>This matter will be considered as part of the Water Corporation's annual review process for water service charges.</p>
<p>20 That the Minister for Education and Training ensures that waste management services and infrastructure are improved at a departmental level to support a reduction in waste to landfill.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p>	<p>The Department of Education is focused on ensuring that waste management services and infrastructure are improved to support a reduction in waste to landfill, in support of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030. The Department will continue with the following initiatives to encourage broader roll-out across the system:</p>

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<p>This should include funding for infrastructure and guidance to schools on implementing systems appropriate to their context.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A waste reduction trial project with the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (EMRC) and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation involving 14 schools in the Bassendean and Bayswater areas. The objective was to understand each school's waste requirements and implement the most effective waste infrastructure for their context. The learnings from the trial will inform how to progress similar initiatives across the State. • In partnership with WA Return Recycle Renew Ltd (WARRRL) on the Containers for Change container deposit scheme, developing case studies and recommendations for schools to improve understanding of the scheme and increase participation. Containers for Change deposit facilities are to be installed in the Department's East Perth office in July 2022. • Supporting schools to join the WasteSorted Schools Program and working with schools who do this well to assist other schools starting out on their sustainability journey. • Communicating with schools on the phasing out of single-use plastics from 1 January 2022 and the implementation of the ban from 1 July 2022. The Department also works with DWER on developing case studies for schools for replacing plastic items with more sustainable options. • Working with the Department of Finance regarding the Western Australian Social Procurement Framework and Environmental Procurement Guide and how they apply to the current Common Use Arrangements (CUA). • Developing online resources to promote the categorisation of sustainable and Indigenous products available on some CUA provider websites so schools can make informed buying decisions. • Encouraging the implementation of further waste diversion initiatives in schools including REDcycle and TerraCycle to further reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and to encourage a community approach to the responsible management and avoidance of waste.
<p>21. The Minister for Education and Training Ensures that teachers are surveyed following the rollout of new curriculum resources to identify areas of further need, especially in relation to sustainability and climate change.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The Government has recently allocated more than \$11.4 million to develop new curriculum materials and associated training that support the continued implementation of the Australian Curriculum, as part of the School Education Act Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2019. This is accompanied by up to half a day of professional learning to 'unpack' these resources. Many of the 170 resources relate to climate change or the sustainability cross-curriculum priority, and teachers will be invited to provide feedback on these resources.</p>
<p>22. The Minister for Education and Training directs the Department of Education to examine the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Climate Change Learning Programme, to determine whether a similar programme could be created in alignment with the Western Australian curriculum.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>The recommendation is noted.</p>
<p>23. That the Minister for Education and Training dedicates funding to provide quality professional development opportunities for teachers in relation to sustainability and climate change. Funding should cover the cost of sessions plus relief teacher coverage.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>Funding is provided for professional learning opportunities for teachers and delivered through the Teacher Development Schools initiative, with designated school(s) having responsibility for professional learning related to sustainability and climate change. Much of this professional learning is delivered online.</p>
<p>24. The Minister for Education and Training advocates at a national level, through the Education Ministers Meeting, for incorporating competencies for sustainability and climate change in national teaching standards.</p>	<p>Not supported</p>	<p>The Government will implement an alternative approach to address the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>The Department will raise sustainability with the Deans of WA Universities to explore opportunities to strengthen competencies in university teaching qualifications.</p> <p>The Minister for Education and Training will raise this with the Vice Chancellors of the WA Universities at the next Western Australian Higher Education Council.</p>