

**Inquiry into how the Western
Australian Government's progress
towards achieving Environmental,
Social and Governance (ESG)
outcomes is assisting to secure
international investment**

*Submission to Western Australian
Parliamentary inquiry*

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About Doctors for the Environment Australia

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) is an independent, self-funded, non-government organisation of medical doctors and students in all Australian states and territories.

DEA's work is based on the premise that humans need a future with clean air and water, healthy soils capable of producing nutritious food, a stable climate, and a complex, diverse and interconnected humanity whose needs are met in a sustainable way. We are therefore interested in environmental protection and restoration to promote human health and social stability.

Acknowledgement of Country

Doctors for the Environment Australia's members live and work around Australia. We would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of these lands, in the spirit of reconciliation.

We recognise that First Nations peoples have cared for Country and lived sustainably for millennia, and that sovereignty of this land was never ceded. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past and present, and to emerging leaders.

Background

The Western Australia Government has made a clear commitment to the achievement of the Paris Agreement objective of net zero emissions by 2050 in its Climate Change Bill 2023, and has also acknowledged the importance of supporting Australia's national pursuit of the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.¹

We note the guide for submission articulates that:

In December 2021, the UN Secretary-General declared that the climate crisis is a code red for humanity, warning that urgent action is required to place the world on the right trajectory and that every country has a part to play to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Global emissions reduction efforts are now accelerating and the shift to a carbon constrained future is driving interest in sustainable finance markets. International investors are seeking greener, more sustainable opportunities and there has been an uptake of corporate accountability for ESG issues.

The pressure is now building for governments to adopt ESG frameworks and embed environmental and social considerations in its public sector decision-making to ensure their competitiveness on the global investment market.

¹ [Supporting continuous improvement on ESG | Government of Western Australia 2023](#)

In response, the Public Accounts Committee has been tasked with undertaking an inquiry into how the Western Australian Government's progress towards achieving Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) outcomes is assisting to secure international investment.

We note the purpose of this is to 'examine how climate risks may impact the State Government's ability to achieve its objectives and how climate action is improving ESG outcomes for Western Australians.'²

DEA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to inquire into and report on how the Western Australian Government's progress towards achieving Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) outcomes is assisting to secure international investment.

DEA also wishes to highlight that the UN has also called climate change 'the single biggest health threat facing humanity'.³ As medical doctors, DEA, both Nationally and in WA, wishes to bring to light the critical risk that climate change poses to the health of Western Australians, and the necessity to take a 'health in all policies' approach to safeguard community health, wellbeing and economic stability, both now and into the future.

We specifically address the terms of reference of the inquiry below.

How the state government's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 will help improve ESG outcomes

Credible, reliable and valid ESG outcomes are vital for human health

The ESGs are clearly relevant to public health, and, at the same time, to the reputation of Western Australia as a credible and reliable investment choice in the international ESG investment field.

The measurement of the WA Government's ESG policies and strategies against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (the "UN goals") is mainly credible in environmental and social terms. However, in governance terms, the UN goals are not a reliable, and nor are they a credible, set of goals with respect to the range of mitigation and adaptation targets tailored to climate change *per se*⁴.

To attract responsible international investors, **we recommend that the Western Australian government also adopts (in addition to the UN goals) targets and measures for the management of climate risk in the public interest.**^{5,6,7,8}

² [Inquiry into how the Western Australian Government's progress towards achieving Environmental, Social and Governance \(ESG\) outcomes is assisting to secure international investment](#)

³ [Fast facts on climate and health | UN](#)

⁴ [WA's ESG Commitment | WA Treasury Corporation 2021-2023](#)

⁵ [Climate-related financial disclosures - Policy Impact Analysis | Australian Government Treasury, September 2023](#)

⁶ [ASIC Chair's AFR ESG Summit speech | Joe Longo 5 June 2023](#)

⁷ [ESG Investing: Practices Progress and Challenges | OECD Paris | R. Boffor, R. Patalano 2020](#)

⁸ [D. Public Interest Framework \(Framework\) for the Development of International Audit-related Standards | Public Interest Oversight Board](#)

Environmental and climate policies, or the lack of, directly impact health outcomes including their social and economic costs to governments, communities and individuals. For instance, air and water quality standards are clearly connected to the burden of respiratory, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disease. Furthermore, global heating caused by human activity has even wider impacts on human health – these are outlined in the DEA resource *How climate change affects your health: the facts*.⁹

Briefly, climate change affects health in many ways – directly through physical trauma, illness and mortality caused by extreme weather events such as floods, storms, bushfires and heatwaves, and indirectly through changing patterns of infectious diseases and air pollution, exposure to bushfire smoke and allergens, rising sea levels with coastal inundation, biodiversity loss, and threats to secure shelter, food, and water. A warming climate is clearly and inextricably linked to the disruption of environmental conditions that provide the very fundamentals for our physical and mental health – clean air, clean water, reliable sources of healthy and nutritious food, adequate shelter, and stable climatic conditions

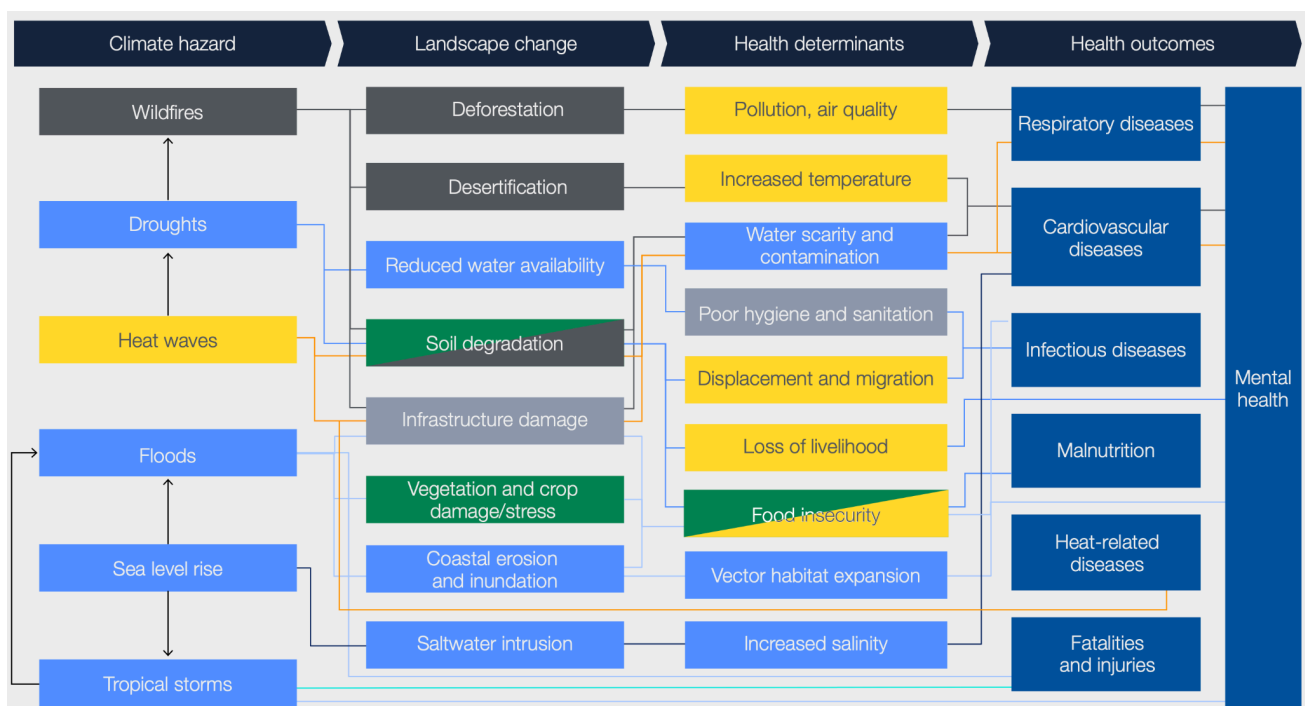


Figure 1: The impacts of climate change on health. This demonstrates pathways of impact both directly, and also through landscape change and social impacts (World Economic Forum & Wyman, 2024).

A commitment to net zero is a first step

A commitment to net zero emissions is a commitment to minimise the effects of global heating on human health, including the associated social and financial costs. As such, health outcomes should be key metrics by which the government’s success in improving ESG outcomes are measured. Careful monitoring of the health impacts of all policies is consistent with the WHO Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. The WHO has specifically endorsed the application of the HiAP framework to governmental action on meeting the sustainable development goals – these are integral to ESG outcomes.

⁹ [How Climate Change Affects Your Health: The Facts - DEA](#)

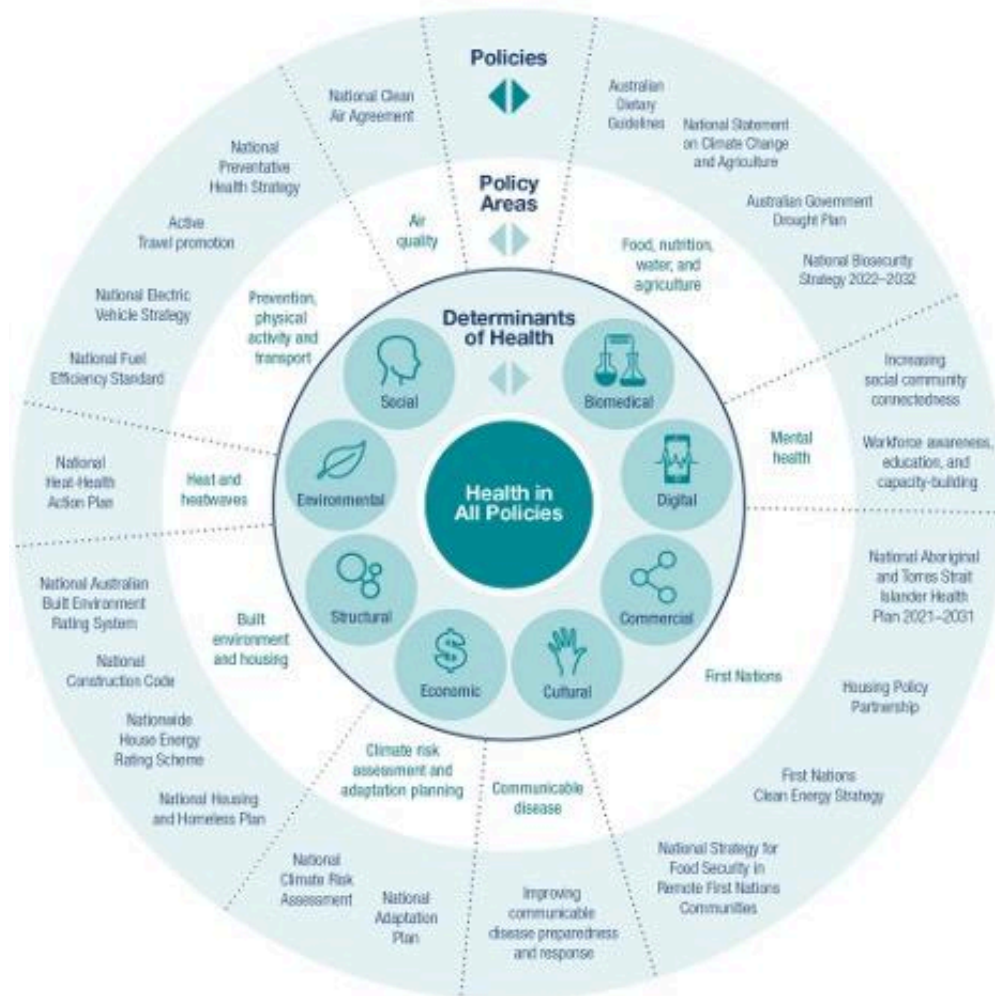


Figure 2: Health in All Policies, from the National Health and Climate Strategy.¹⁰

A few additional resources we point the Parliamentary Inquiry team to:

- [WHO Promoting health in all policies](#)
- [Key Learning on Health in All Policies Implementation from Around the World](#)
- [Why ESG must include health equity](#)
- [Health, Climate change, and Integrated ESG strategies](#)
- [WHO - Green Financing - for good health, people, and planet](#)
- [World Economic Forum - investing in health equity, 2022](#)
- [Article - Corporate Social Responsibility, a PR Invention](#)

How the state government is actively engaging Aboriginal and young people in this decision-making

Current national and Western Australian policy and regulatory frameworks for developments that harm both the environment and climate (such as fossil fuel developments, including offshore oil and gas) have

¹⁰ [National Health and Climate Strategy | Department of Health and Aged Care](#)

repeatedly and consistently failed to appropriately consult and protect stakeholders. These stakeholders include those most likely to be impacted by a changing climate - such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and young people.

While the ESG projects undertaken with respect to Aboriginal people and other social programmes and projects are commendable¹¹, the WA state government continues to fail these 'high priority' populations, by not adopting a whole of government cross sectoral approach to best-practice community engagement and empowerment^{12,13} and a communities of practice approach with respect to Aboriginal people *and* young people. This has clear and direct impacts on these stakeholders' current and future health and wellbeing and must be reflected in ESG policy and outcomes.

Issues in current processes include the failure:

- to fully include both groups in policy design – including co-design, co-development, co-participation/co-implementation, co-monitoring and assessment, and oversight/co-governance
- to disclose, consider and use the precautionary principle with regard to intergenerational and intragenerational equity associated with projects with environmental harms and climate change impacts
- of transparency and accountability in decision making processes
- to include Aboriginal people and young people in the measurement and assessment of outcomes.

These issues are explored further below.

Rights of indigenous people

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), to which Australia is a signatory, outlines the rights of all Indigenous peoples, including the rights:

- to self-determination
- to protect their culture through practices, languages, education, media, and religion, including control of their intellectual property
- of freedom of governance and economic development
- to health
- to land rights - including environmental concerns.¹⁴

These rights extend to free, prior and informed consent in matters that impact land, sea, and Culture.¹⁵

If Australia's commitment to the UNDRIP is to have meaning, these principles must be integral to both national and Western Australian ESG policy and outcome assessments. Social Ventures Australia outlines such an approach to working with First Nations peoples.¹⁶

¹¹ [Supporting Continuous Improvement in ESG Outcomes for Western Australia - June 2023 Update](#)

¹² For examples of community engagement spectrum and case studies, see [IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum](#)

¹³ Examples of communities of practice in Aboriginal health workforce settings: [The role of Communities of Practice in improving practice in Indigenous health and education settings: A systematic review](#)

¹⁴ [Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | UN 2007](#)

¹⁵ [Engaging with Traditional Owners | AIATSIS](#)

¹⁶ [A principled approach to working with First Nations peoples - Social Ventures Australia](#)

Rights of young people

The current WA Government policy and regulatory framework does not sufficiently consider harms to the health and wellbeing of young people, particularly in decision-making around fossil fuel developments. It is vital that young people and their voices are considered and included in ESG decision-making and outcome measurement. This is especially important for those policies relevant to global heating, as children are disproportionately affected by the outcomes of such decisions. There are no less than 16 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators linked to the health of children, adolescents, and youth that are negatively impacted by climate change or its drivers.¹⁷

- Children suffer 90% of the burden of death and disability caused by climate change.
- Climate change is fundamentally a child rights issue – it adversely impacts children's right to life, survival, development, protection and participation.
- As ratifiers of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, our national and state governments have a legal obligation and duty of care to act in the best interests of children. In this context, this refers to protecting children from the harmful effects of climate change and environmental destruction.
- Adopting a values-centered approach which prioritises child health and wellbeing in its decision-making will generate lifelong, intergenerational and economic benefits.¹⁸

Young people have shown their willingness to be involved in ESG related decision-making through climate activism, spurred on by the ongoing failure of all levels of government to take action that is commensurate with the challenge of global heating.¹⁹ Emissions reduction is a vital ESG outcome for the future of young people, particularly given the intergenerational equity and human rights issues involved.^{20,21}

We recommend that a whole of government, cross-sectoral, approach to best-practice community engagement and empowerment and communities of practice approach with respect to Aboriginal people and young people is adopted in the ESG policies, strategies and programmes.

Best practice for achieving health outcomes for all

Improving practice engagement through a human rights and health equity approach

...not only a seat at the table, but a radical redesign of the table to centre equity and justice for all...

A human rights based approach to decision making includes the right to:

- participation
- equity and non-discrimination

¹⁷ [Climate Change, Health, & Intergenerational Equity | WHO International](#)

¹⁸ [Federal Senate inquiry into the Climate Change Amendment \(Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity\) Bill 2023 - DEA](#)

¹⁹ [Young people call for intergenerational solidarity on the climate crisis | UN Environment Program](#)

²⁰ [Children, Adolescents, and Youth Pioneering a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change - PMC](#)

²¹ [Integrating Youth Perspectives: Adopting a Human Rights and Public Health Approach to Climate Action - PMC](#)

- transparency
- accountability.

To improve ESG decision-making, we recommend:

- explicit consideration of the impacts of direct and indirect environmental harm (including from climate change) particularly on Aboriginal peoples and young people.
- including both young people and Aboriginal people in formal governance models at all stages of design, from inception, to implementation, and evaluation
- ensuring appropriate clarity and transparency in decision-making, including creating mechanisms of accountability and integration into policy-making
- ensuring appropriate remuneration for time and input for community members, given their multiple social and personal responsibilities.

International standards and agreements

We draw attention to the following international agreements and standards, which could be argued as not being upheld by current WA policy in regards ESG, investment, and public expenditure:

- Paris Agreement - with science based targets to reach net-zero by 2050
- UN Sustainable Development Goals²²
 - alignment of measures of success and incentives to achieving targets under the SDGs
- International Declaration on the rights of Indigenous people²³
- The rights of young people to be:
 - safe
 - contribute to decisions
 - have a healthy life.²⁴

To move forward, we would urge integration of these into ESG consideration in the Whole of WA economy, and across government jurisdictions and the non-government sector, with incentivisation for business, industry and other sectors that encourage a more rapid transition, regeneration of nature / nature positive design, and improvement in health and social equity and outcomes.

Examples of innovative practice and opportunities for change:

- [The Wellbeing Economy in Brief](#)
- WHO - [Transforming Economies to value what matters](#)
- WHO - [Rethinking and building a whole of society approach - Valuing Health for all](#)
- WHO - [public sector capacity, budgets and dynamic capabilities towards Health for All](#)
- [Natural Capital Protocol](#)
- [The ANDI index](#). We particularly draw your attention to the information located in the following articles located on the site:²⁵
 - Consideration of citizen engagement in policy making and measurement of success

²² [The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development | UN](#)

²³ [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

²⁴ [Rights of WA children | Commissioner for Children and Young People WA](#)

²⁵ <https://www.andi.org.au/library/>

- Consideration of measures of wellbeing over GDP
- Redefining progress with measurements of wellbeing
- The integration of Regenerative Economics principles into incentives and opportunities.
 - Recognising the limits of growth within current social and ecological boundaries and promoting place based, ecosystem approaches to community, economic and planetary relationships.²⁶
 - An example of this would be businesses such as Patagonia, which centre their business model on achieving social and environmental outcomes. There is the opportunity to integrate incentives, mandates, and legislative requirements for business and industry in WA to achieve similar outcomes.

We recommend that engagement about ESGs is conducted within a human rights and health equity framework.

The financial implications of doing nothing – health impacts

Given that human health is both directly and indirectly impacted by the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and from other impacts of climate change, the human and financial costs of doing nothing are extensive. The human cost of carbon is now well recognised as a way to report on and record the impacts of carbon emissions on human lives. Internationally, scientific and health experts have repeatedly discussed the social and human health cost of current policies and practices related to climate change.^{27,28} Recent comprehensive analysis has also highlighted that previous estimates of the social cost of carbon have been grossly underestimated.²⁹

The large human and economic costs of bushfires and their smoke alone on Australia and its healthcare system are outlined in the 2021 report *Climate Change and Australia's Healthcare Systems*.³⁰

Recent evidence from Western Australia in regards the impacts of heat alone includes:

- Patel, D.J., Le; Xiao, Jianguo; Jansz, Janis; Yun, Grace; Lin, Ting; Robertson, Andrew [Joint effects of heatwaves and air quality on ambulance services for vulnerable populations in Perth, western Australia](#). Environmental Pollution, 2019. **252**: p. 532-542.
- Tong, M.X., et al., [Emergency department visits and associated healthcare costs attributable to increasing temperature in the context of climate change in Perth, Western Australia, 2012–2019](#). Environmental Research Letters, 2021. **16**(6): p. 065011.
- Tong, M.X., et al., [Hospital healthcare costs attributable to heat and future estimations in the context of climate change in Perth, Western Australia](#). Advances in Climate Change Research, 2021. **12**(5): p. 638-648.
- Xiao, J., et al., [Variation in Population Vulnerability to Heat Wave in Western Australia](#). Frontiers in public health, 2017. **5**: p. 64-64.

²⁶ [Explore the Eight Principles of a Regenerative Economy | The Capital Institute](#)

²⁷ [Quantifying the human cost of global warming | Nature Sustainability](#)

²⁸ [The mortality cost of carbon | Nature Communications](#)

²⁹ [Comprehensive evidence implies a higher social cost of CO2 | Nature](#)

³⁰ [Climate Change and Australia's Healthcare Systems: A Review of Literature, Policy and Practice | RACP](#)

- [Disaster Preparedness and Management Directorate | About heatwave - What areas of WA are most affected by heatwave? | WA Department of Health](#)
- Patel, D., et al., [Joint effect of heatwaves and air quality on emergency department attendances for vulnerable population in Perth, Western Australia, 2006 to 2015](#). Environmental Research, 2019. **174**: p. 80-87.

Other Australia wide evidence on the impacts of heat and climate change (including extreme weather):

- [AIHW, Let's talk about the weather: injuries related to extreme weather](#) - 2023
- [Medical Journal of Australia - Report of the Lancet Countdown](#) - 2023
- [Climate and Health Inquiry, WA](#) - 2020

Health impacts resulting from exposure to heat and extreme weather and drought translate into economic costs both in the near term through disruption of livelihoods, decreased productivity and direct healthcare costs, and in the longer term through causation and exacerbation of mental ill health, chronic non-communicable disease and disability, and cumulative damage and degradation to infrastructure.

Examples:

- [Heat stress causes substantial labour productivity loss in Australia](#)
- The total economic cost of the 2010–11 Queensland floods is estimated to be \$14.1 billion (in 2015 dollars), with \$7.4 billion in intangible social impacts of which the lifetime mental health costs were estimated to be \$5.9 billion. For the 2009 Victorian bushfires the lifetime mental health costs were estimated at more than \$1 billion (2015 dollars).³¹

The consequences of climate change are non-linear, meaning that for each increment of increased atmospheric greenhouse emissions and surface mean surface temperature, the impacts are proceeding at a non-incremental or exponential rate.

As stated in the most recent IPCC 6th Assessment Report, 'Climatic and non-climatic risks will increasingly interact, creating compound and cascading risks that are more complex and difficult to manage', indicating the economic impacts and costs are will also rise at a far greater and less predictable rate into the future.³²

Inaction on climate change has clear associated cost implications for the broader determinants of health as well as the healthcare sector itself. Consequently, 40 million health professionals from around the world have recently joined a call for strong climate action to protect health.³³ The health and economic burden of climate change is overwhelming if no effective action is taken to slow global heating and to adapt to the changes that we can no longer avoid.

DEA recommends that a risk management governance approach, one that measures the costs and benefits of inaction and action in climate change and other social and environmental terms be adopted.

³¹[The cost of natural disasters: Australian experiences | Australian Business Roundtable 2016](#)

³²[AR6 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements | IPCC 2023](#)

³³[Over 40 million health professionals demand bold health and climate action at COP28 | WHO News release](#)

Other WA considerations that intersect with ESG

The WA Government remains a conspicuous laggard across Australia and the developed world in taking effective action to reduce carbon emissions and the impact of climate change. Instead it has a growing reputation as a Government that keeps making decisions that accelerate harm.

The lack of 2030 whole of economy targets in the WA State Climate Change Bill³⁴ de-incentivises timely change and therefore will be likely to discourage the rapid uptake of investment in the regenerative decarbonisation practices that are required.

The continued pushing and funding of Carbon Capture and Storage as ‘a mechanism to achieve net zero’, as described in the *Sectoral emissions reduction strategy*³⁵ goes against meaningful change and could be considered greenwashing, and it will therefore be unlikely to pass the pub test in the eyes of the international responsible investment field.

Further, the continued practice of the government to promote the narrative of ‘WA is different’ to allow for the continued expansion / extension of gas developments, and damaging prescribed burning, and land clearing practices, have similar outcomes in regards industry and business ‘push’ for, or confidence in, financing for regenerative and meaningful ESG outcomes.

We ask that the government aligns and adopts urgent climate change action so that international investors are incentivized to support a rapid uptake of regenerative decarbonisation in WA, so that net zero by 2050 can be achieved without greenwashing.

There are already existing health and climate documents in WA. These include:

- WA Climate and Health Inquiry (2020)³⁶
- WA Public Health Act 2016.

We ask the Parliamentary Inquiry panel to consider how the current ESG framework considers and references the directions, strategies and actions of these documents and that the Parliamentary Inquiry team consider how future commitments and actions on ESG in WA could better align with these recommendations.

In specific reference to the WA Public Health Act, the following is quoted WA Department of Health Website:

The Public Health Act 2016 provides a flexible and proactive framework for the regulation of public health. This framework is designed to:

- promote public health and well-being in the community
- help to prevent disease, injury, disability and premature death
- inform individuals and communities about public health risks

³⁴ [WA Climate Change Bill 2023](#)

³⁵ [Sectoral emissions reduction strategy for Western Australia | WA Government 2023](#)

³⁶ [Climate Health WA Inquiry Final Report | WA Department of Health](#)

- encourage individuals and their communities to plan for, create and maintain a healthy environment
- support programs and campaigns intended to improve public health
- collect information about the incidence and prevalence of diseases and other public health risks for research purposes
- reduce the health inequalities in public health of disadvantaged communities.”

The principles of this Act include:

Principle	What it means
Sustainability principle	<p>Ensure that our decisions and actions not only benefit people today, but do not have adverse consequences for future generations.</p> <p>It means we have a responsibility to consider public health, social, economic and environmental needs simultaneously in the decisions we make to ensure that our decisions and actions not only benefit people today, but do not have adverse consequences for future generations.</p> <p>Although public health needs should weigh most significantly on the minds of decision makers in the context of the Act, other interests should not be dismissed or assumed to have been considered</p>
Precautionary principle	<p>When there is limited scientific evidence it is better to 'err on the side of caution' to protect public health.</p> <p>It means where there is a possible threat to public health (e.g. an outbreak of a new strain of an infectious disease) but there is a lack of scientific evidence or certainty about the nature of the threat, then action to prevent or control the threat should not be delayed until more is known.</p> <p>Cost effective steps should be taken to prevent, control or abate the threat until evidence emerges that no harm will result. If in doubt, it is better to 'err on the side of caution'.</p>
Principle of proportionality	<p>Decisions and responses should be made proportionate to the public health risk present.</p> <p>This principle is concerned with protecting individuals from unjustified encroachment upon their rights. However, when protecting against a risk to public health, if the public interest outweighs the rights of an individual, this can justify action being taken, subject to any specific constraints in the Act.</p>
Principle of intergenerational equity	<p>The present generation should ensure that public health is maintained or enhanced to ensure future generations benefit.</p> <p>This principle requires an agency responsible for public health and wellbeing to maintain a high standard of public health, and continually strive to enhance public health in order that succeeding generations will benefit.</p> <p>Many decisions made to protect and advance public health have significance for future generations and in these cases, long term impacts need to be considered.</p> <p>Recognition of the need to consider long term impacts can support and strengthen initiatives employed to secure more immediate benefits. For example, local strategies to create safer local neighbourhoods (by improving lighting, footpaths, cycle-ways and traffic flow) will encourage people to become more</p>

active, while also reducing their dependence on motor vehicle use, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

We suggest that current and future ESG incentives encourage ‘all policies, industries and business’ to ensure we are meeting these requirements.

Climate change adaptation and resilience

As we continue to face a destabilised climate and world, it is vital to build in management of climate risk and climate adaptation into ESG. There are synergies here with other important work being done in the WA government on climate adaptation for all sectors, including Health and Human services.³⁷ With the adaptive capacity of the health sector and communities so directly dependent on the responses across all other sectors, there needs to be strong, early, and ongoing sharing of information and integration of health consideration and outcome across all adaptation plans, including the integration into ESG actions and measurements of success. Governance modeling that ensures cross-sector collaboration, aligned with funding and resourcing for networking, communication, and collaboration is essential for outcomes.

An integrated approach that addresses the social and environmental determinants of health³⁸ will also minimise financial risk from global heating. Transitions of ESG to decrease transitional risk and promote equity and health for all are central to this. ESG programs that focus on health help build climate resilience and create financial benefits.³⁹ Through a just adaptation approach, we can also achieve outcomes for all individuals in the community, which links back to the necessity to prioritise, and work with, First Nations and youth.⁴⁰

Other important and relevant work to consider here is the transition risk associated with continued investment in fossil fuels as the world decarbonises. With both Climate related financial disclosures and nature related financial disclosures on the horizon, WA, a strong ESG approach will help decrease risk and exposure to stranded assets.

We recommend that the suite of WA Government climate mitigation and adaptation policies⁴¹, including its legislation, are integrated into the ESG outcomes framework, as well as an alignment of these with public health, human rights and intersectoral ESG targets and continuous improvement strategies.

Conclusion

The constructs of capitalism and perpetual economic growth drive business and industry toward the goal of ‘profit’ with little consideration of outcomes for the community and environment (‘purpose’).

³⁷ [Climate Adaptation Strategy | Western Australian Government](#)

³⁸ [Health and Climate Change: Integrated ESG Strategies and Communications Help Address Complex Challenges - FINN Partners](#)

³⁹ [ESG programs that focus on health help build climate resilience, create financial benefits | Stantec 2023](#)

⁴⁰ [A National Strategy for Just Adaptation | Future Earth Australia](#)

⁴¹ [Western Australian Climate Change Policy: themes, programs and initiatives | WA Government 2024](#)

Climate change, extreme weather, biodiversity collapse, pollution, loss of social cohesion, erosion of social equity and human rights, and geopolitical destabilisations are the greatest global threats we currently face. There needs to be a shift away from GDP and economic growth as the 'most important' measure of success, with an honest, continued, and purpose driven intention for integration of human and planetary wellbeing, including the achieving of social equity and justice as 'outcomes'.

Ensuring there are reliable, standardised, validated, benchmarked, measurable outcomes used will be necessary for this to occur. As a government, there is a role to guide and drive for more 'responsible and ethically right' actions via incentives and regulations that necessitate proactive action to achieve outcomes for all.

In summary the Doctors for the Environment Australia recommendations are that the WA Government improves its capacity to attract international responsible investment by:

- **Adopting (in addition to the UN goals) mitigation and adaptation targets and measures for the management of *climate risk*, in the public interest.**
- **Developing a whole of government cross-sectoral approach to best-practice community engagement, empowerment and communities of practice approach with Aboriginal people *and* young people is adopted in the ESG policies, strategies and programmes.**
- **Ensuring engagement about ESG targets is conducted – and policy set – within a human rights and health equity framework.**
- **Ensuring timely climate change action so that international investors are incentivized to support a rapid uptake of regenerative decarbonisation in WA, so that net zero by 2050 can be achieved without greenwashing.**
- **Considering how the current ESG framework considers and references the directions, strategies and actions of the *WA Climate and Health Inquiry (2020)* and the *WA Public Health Act 2016* so that the WA ESGs can be better aligned with these recommendations.**
- **Making sure the suite of WA Government climate change mitigation and adaptation policies are integrated into the ESG outcomes framework, as well as an alignment of these with public health, human rights and intersectoral ESG targets, along with their continuous improvement strategies.**

Thank you for considering this submission.