

The Education and Health Standing Committee will inquire into the response of Western Australian schools to climate change.

In particular, the inquiry will consider:

a. The co-benefits of climate action in schools

Students learn which impacts on their actions for the rest of their lives. This is a massive investment in the future.

b. Climate change mitigation and adaptation actions currently being undertaken in schools, and the benefits they are achieving

The activities in schools are adhoc and piecemeal and driven by passionate teachers, restricted by budgets.

c. Barriers that schools encounter in undertaking climate action and how these can be addressed

Recycling and waste removal is an additional cost to schools.

It doesn't seem to be anyone's job to take out recycling bins or manage waste. It comes down to teaching staff wheeling bins out, or students during class time.

Schools can't access FOGO as Local Government says they are Commercial instead of residential.

Students and staff not engaging in recycling. We need support in improving this. But also, compliance comes with forcing them. If we waited for the community to be on board with seatbelts, people still wouldn't wear them. But, governments made them compulsory and now we wouldn't dream of NOT wearing them. Maybe change needs to be forced.

Cost (time) of sorting waste

Cost of removal of waste (recyclables, cardboard, green waste). It is cheaper for the school to put everything into a skip bin for landfill.

d. What more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change.

Solar panels for all schools.

This is a no-brainer. The sun shines when students are at school

Change job descriptions of Cleaners and Gardeners to include waste sorting.

Make Recycling Mandatory in All schools.

Encourage (or Mandate) use of Sustainable Products

Sustainable options in regards to lots of things are more expensive (eco-friendly copy paper, compostable bin liners, compostable laminating film, eco-friendly toilet paper/paper towel/kitchen paper etc). Schools have limited budgets and find it difficult to pay extra for these things. It needs to be mandated, or subsidised, or have a list of preferred suppliers/products.

Make Sustainability a targeted initiative.

Lynwood Senior High School employs a Sustainability Program Coordinator who saves the school more money than they cost, as well as achieving benefits for students, the community and environment. They support teachers to include sustainability in the curriculum, in subjects as diverse as phys ed and cooking. They also work with staff and students to improve sustainability practices at school. It would be great if all schools had one of these. Even if just for a fixed term such as 3 years to get the program going. Lynwood is definitely worth looking at as a case study of what can be done in a Secondary setting.

Other suggestions:

Ban purchase of electric storage hot water systems, and similar heavy users of electricity.

Investigate use of EV buses, and charge points at school for those who drive EV's (especially if they can be charged using solar power).

Support BYOD in all schools, to reduce use of paper, text books, printing, need for paper recycling bins etc.

Submitted by

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