

# HON. ROBIN CHAPPLE MLC

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To Whom it may concern,

## RE: Issues Paper: Climate Change in WA, September 2019

In relation to the Issues Paper ‘*Climate Change in Western Australia*’ (September 2019), please find below my comments on the paper’s contents, for your consideration. For clarity and ease, they have been compiled as they appear in the paper, with the subtitles and key point questions given for context.

### 1. Transforming energy

1. What are the main challenges for decarbonising Western Australia’s electricity supply while ensuring adequate generation capacity, security and reliability?
2. What are the most effective ways to overcome these challenges by 2030?
3. Should the electricity sector make a pro-rata (or greater) contribution to Australia’s national greenhouse gas emission targets?
4. How fast do you think the transition of the electricity sector should occur?

It cannot be understated that decarbonising the energy supply for an entire state – let alone such a big state – is no easy feat. However, entire countries have achieved this and many more are working towards it. The biggest challenge we face now is the timeframe in which this must occur. Inaction by previous governments, and stalling by our current one has left us with a lot of work to do in very little time. Thankfully, WA can use the successes and failures of these other jurisdictions; both smaller and larger than our own, to produce a streamlined response to climate change and decarbonisation. We must be careful when discussing “main challenges” to decarbonising the WA electricity grid. It is a complex issue but there is no single challenge that can, or should, hinder this obligation. Our Pilbara region, according to the Department of Primary Industries, receives the most hours of sunlight per day than anywhere else in Australia<sup>1</sup>, and our state boasts some of the best wind resources in the country<sup>2</sup> -- frankly, our greatest challenge at present is lethargy. Particularly noteworthy, the United Kingdom’s *Renewable Obligation* mechanism<sup>3</sup>, in simul with their domestic-focused *Feed-in-Tariff*<sup>4</sup> scheme, has enabled the achievement of 35.5% of total electricity via renewables, and a record-low of 0.6% from coal for the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-change/climate-pilbara-region-western-australia>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/energy/resources/other-renewable-energy-resources/wind-energy>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.energy-uk.org.uk/energy-industry/renewable-generation.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.energy-uk.org.uk/energy-industry/renewable-generation.html>

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second quarter of this year<sup>5</sup>. However, in order to do this the Government must be honest with respect to industry proponents. Protecting their investments is no longer a viable option, globally.

The board is set and the pieces are moving. We, in WA, face the serious risk of being left behind in the next decade. We must call upon the government to cease investment in LNG and divert investment to the growing technologies market, of which WA lithium is a valuable component. WA cannot move forward while the arms of our state are tied up in LNG and coal. The WA people, along with others around the globe have welcomed recycling laws, packaging bans, and other necessary strategies, and I have no doubt they would support genuine reform from this government. As discussed elsewhere, the biggest challenge we face right now in WA is inaction at the highest levels of government. The individual citizen can no longer be the scapegoat for this government; they must hold their friends in industry accountable for their feigned ignorance and deafening silence in such discussions.

The electricity sector is obviously a huge component of GHG emissions however, it is undeniable that, at present, we rely heavily on this sector to provide basic grid power. Given the dependent nature of this relationship, enacting huge changes from the top down would be the fastest way to decarbonise the entire sector. Changes of this scale rarely happen without immediate, tangible gain and for this reason I believe the electricity sector should initially provide greater contributions than pro-rata. However, it is important that the sector as a whole is presented with sizeable performance-based concessions. That is to say, a generator that is earnestly moving away from fossil fuels ought to be rewarded on this basis, more so than a generator who is not.

The change to renewable and carbon-independent energy should have happened in line with other OECD countries; some dozen years ago. The Australian government is garnering negative international and domestic attention due to the actions of its representatives. We are alienating our pacific neighbours, and we are falling well behind our peers in regards to renewables. It would be in the best interests of the government to transition as quickly as is genuinely viable. This process requires clear goals for energy generators and an actionable, long-term framework that incorporates multiple sectors and stakeholders. For the sake of public transparency, and for industry to enact long-term plans, this government must provide all stakeholders with actionable, timely and relevant goals that comprehensively deal with the issue at hand.

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<sup>5</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/834184/Press\\_Notice\\_September\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/834184/Press_Notice_September_2019.pdf)

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## 2. Industrial innovation

1. What measures have been implemented by your business to lower energy use or emissions?
2. What are the barriers to decoupling energy use and emissions in the resources sector?
3. Have you assessed the implications of the low-carbon transition for your business or sector? How are these risks disclosed to stakeholders?
4. What exemptions should apply to trade-exposed sectors in reducing our emissions?
5. How can the Government of Western Australia foster clean industries and technologies?

The State Government of Western Australia is the authority in WA. For our government to pander to its constituents in such a way; to try and crowdsource ideas under the guise of “open communication”; to follow slowly rather than lead, is disheartening and represents a genuine threat to the whole process.

To entertain the question; each business within each sector is different. Differing goals, resources and business models ensure this. The Government must give detailed frameworks for each sector. To provide example; a second-hand bookshop cannot be managed under the same framework as, say, the Gorgon Project. To try and share onus equally between two such businesses – with the state Government still shirking any responsibility at all – is ludicrous.

People - and often money – tend to take the path of least resistance. Why would any proponent seek to decouple energy use and emissions unless there was a gain? Again, it is absolutely necessary that the state government provide targets and serious consequences of non-compliance to industry proponents. We need the State Government to take charge; to understand the threat to our economy posed by climate change. The government is focused on job growth through industry. There will be no industry if we cannot safeguard the very land we stand on. Our economy depends on people, and people need food and shelter. They *need* land and water. They do not need dividends.

Stakeholders, including private citizens, would be better informed of any risks by the implementation of strict reporting standards. “Commercially confidential”; the governments usual excuse, cannot be allowed to continue when the livelihoods of all Australians are involved. Why should industry be granted the luxury of vague reporting standards and absolute confidentiality when our farmers face droughts and crop failures? Trade-dependent sectors, in WA, also constitute the highest emitters of GHGs and organic pollutants. To offer such businesses exemptions is to undercut the efforts of every other sector and individual in the country. The government would do well to ascertain from industry leaders “what measures have been implemented by [their] business to lower energy use or emissions”, rather than use the typical Australian household as a scapegoat. For the development of viable clean technologies, the government must provide renewable energy targets. Additionally, the State must cease to fund all fossil fuel projects and, more to the point; stop accepting donations from vested interest groups. Industry leaders know

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they have a friend in the WA government and this friendship threatens the quality of life of ordinary Australians. The State Government must diversify the economy, and the energy grid, if we are to have any hope of resilience in the coming decade. WA cannot depend, as it has for so long, on the volatile boom-bust resource industry. Once again, the Government must take the lead; employing cleaner technologies in the government's own workings would go far as a sign of commitment to reducing climate change.

### 3. Future motility

1. What are the barriers to purchasing a low-emissions vehicle for your household or business?
2. What can be done to facilitate the uptake of electric and other low-emission vehicles in Western Australia?
3. How can we further encourage use of public transport and active transport, such as walking and cycling?
4. How can we ensure that Western Australia isn't left behind in the transition to cleaner transportation?

The State Government, as the Authority, must be seen to be actively supporting electric and low-emissions vehicles. The easiest way to do this would be to address fleet purchases, which comprise 45% of new car sales, and subsequently provide a sizeable contribution to the second-hand car market. Furthermore, providing incentives to purchase low-emissions vehicles – such as waiving of registration fees - would aid in the popularity and use of such technologies. Additionally, introducing a ban on the sale of new petrol or diesel vehicles, by 2030, would prove advantageous.

Public transport fares should be partially subsidised by the government, especially those routes that bring passengers into high density areas. By making public transport more accessible, there is greater competition against single driver cars, especially, again, in those high-density areas which are further troubled by issues with parking.

In relation specifically to routes and passenger logistics, the inner suburbs would benefit greatly from a circle route. It is absurd to travel forty minutes from Mount Lawley to Leederville station, when the same distance by car takes eleven minutes. Our infrastructure prioritises vehicles and this, in itself, is problematic in developing a carbon neutral city.

### 4. Regional prosperity

1. How will climate change affect your regional community?
2. What steps can we take to further enhance the resilience of our regions and our primary industries?
3. How can we support the agricultural sector to participate in the low-carbon transition?
4. What opportunities do carbon offset markets present for Western Australian land managers, including Aboriginal groups?
5. What matters should the State Government take into account in developing a strategy for carbon farming in Western Australia?

As member for Mining and Pastoral Region, my regional community is already facing the effects of climate change. People are worried about water, about land, and about the state

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of their air. People are going further afield for pasture, and agriculture and industry leaders are in the process of diverting and safeguarding water supplies. As climate change progresses, we may lose all of our inland communities as fires and droughts ravage our north. Our unique and world-class tourism spots; our reefs and our bushland, will disappear. The tourism economy of these regional communities is under direct threat from climate change. Nobody will visit our state to see dead oceans and piles of ash. The City of Perth, built on reclaimed wetlands, cannot survive a rising ocean. If sea level rise continues at the current rate - twice the global average - our coastal suburbs and ports are under direct threat.

The Government must do all it can to manage our water supplies. Outrageous amounts of water cannot be ensured for industry proponents. In addition, industry must be made to hire workers locally. Last financial year, over 4 million people flew intrastate<sup>6</sup> (regionally). That is a considerable amount of flights and unjustified additional pollution. Meanwhile our regional workers remain unemployed.

To further enhance the resilience of our regions, industry must be held accountable for pollution, and prime agricultural or ecological land must be safeguarded against their expansion. We must continue to support the wishes of farmers and native title holders in relation to land use. It is imperative that constituents have a sense of ownership and agency in protecting and conserving their lands and waters.

The Government must support the introduction and implementation of new technologies, methods, and crops to aid farmers in transitioning. In order to support the low-carbon transition in the agricultural sector, the Government must incentivise the growth of crops over fodder and livestock. While there is threat of drought, to use water on fodder crops is a rube-goldberg-machine for wasting water.

Carbon offset, specifically carbon farming presents great opportunities<sup>7</sup>. By supporting carbon farming, and utilising Indigenous groups, WA could repair its bushland, improve scrub biodiversity, and provide genuine and long-lasting sources of traditional *bush tucker*; furthering independence from a wasteful agricultural system in areas where it is not viable. This, in turn, would further the acknowledgment and understanding of traditional Aboriginal cultures, and solidify people's connection to land, as well as utilising and celebrating threatened traditional knowledge.

In developing a carbon-farming strategy for WA, the implementation of carbon sequestration funding (for tree establishment under the carbon price package), would ensure it targets genuine biodiversity plantings. It would also support inter-harvest

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.perthairport.com.au/Home/corporate/about-us/airport-statistics>

<sup>7</sup> <https://carbonfarmersofaustralia.com.au/carbon-farming/>

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averaging to allow calculation of harvesting and subsequent timber rotations overtime. Additionally, careful scrutiny of commercial third party carbon investors is absolutely required. To this end, the Government should also support the revegetation of marginal or degraded agricultural land with suitable local species, with the aim of sequestering carbon, reducing salinity, and establishing self-sustaining plantation

## 5. Waste reduction

1. What areas can we target to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions from waste?
2. What can households, businesses and government do to reduce their waste and compost more?

Emissions from waste account for 2% of the State's total GHG emissions. Again, for the government to ask about waste reduction when they are in support of a north-West Shelf expansion is sheer audacity. Composting will not save the world. The individual cannot stop climate change. The government must take responsibility for their actions, and the actions committed with their assent, instead of blaming a concerned populace.

## 6. Safe and healthy communities

1. What are the main climate risks for your household or your community? What can be done to manage these risks?
2. What are your biggest concerns about Western Australia's future climate?
3. What could be done to ensure your community is better prepared for possible climate impacts?

In 2019, in the fight against mass climate change, our community is a global one. New South Wales is on fire. Venice is flooding. Britain, France and the low countries experienced record-breaking summer temperatures. California faced incredible bushfires. Our pacific-island neighbours are soon to disappear. Our northern neighbours will experience displacement *en masse* as population centres and infrastructure slide into the sea. Western Australia is no exception. Our coastal communities are threatened by sea level rise. Our rural communities are threatened with fire, drought and salinity. We cannot continue to operate as we do. We need drastic and sweeping change.

We, as a global community, are running out of time and our State Government is asking for composting tips. We need to reverse the cuts to emergency services. We need to improve funding for climatic surveys and research. We need to monitor our climate more carefully than ever. Communities need transparent information and they need investment in sustainable technologies and practices.

## 7. Water security

1. What can we do to encourage Western Australians to use water more efficiently and adapt to a drying climate?
2. Are there policies adopted in other jurisdictions we should consider for Western Australia?

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3. What are the best management options to deal with the water security implications of climate change for our agricultural sector?

To encourage responsible water use in WA the Government must engage in genuine and transparent public education. People must be informed of the realities of our situation. In the domestic sense, we must promote rainwater tanks, and “third pipe” plumbing systems designed to reuse graywater

Due to the risk of contamination posed to groundwater and aquifers, unconventional gas extraction processes must be banned immediately. People cannot drink LNG.

## 8. Liveable towns and cities

1. What are the key barriers to improved energy efficiency for our built environment?
2. What information or tools do you require to improve energy efficiency in your household or workplace?
3. What energy efficiency standards or disclosure measures do you support for our homes and offices and the appliances we use in them?
4. How do you think climate change will affect the liveability of your neighbourhood or region?
5. How can we improve the retention of vegetation, particularly tree canopy, in our cities and suburbs?

Increased and unnecessary urban sprawl has decimated the bushland around Perth and has been accompanied by a decrease in canopy cover; leading to hotter surface temperatures at the now-exposed ground level. This influences evaporation and water retention and, in turn, soil composition and salinity. Additionally, the cost and lack of incentive has left many WA buildings with inefficient or outdated energy profile. Government-supported incentives are crucial in convincing private owners to adopt carbon-neutral materials and technologies within their homes.

Most streets in Perth feature a verge, planted with water-intensive ornamental lawn. Replacing lawn with native plant species would use less water, improve ecological resilience, and aid in bolstering plant populations generally. In similar vein, the government should seek to work with developers on the importance of biodiversity and urban forest protection and develop an Industry Code that ensures they will not develop on Bush Forever sites. To aid in this, strengthening 'Parks & Recreation' zoning, so that they can't be renege on when development is proposed, would ensure the permanency of our urban plant life.

As with anything else designed to inform the public, a clear, easily-read and comprehensive standard is best practice. Whatever method the government chooses, it cannot not be argued that this question was asked in good faith. Once again, the onus, having been shirked by the government, seems now to rest on the individual West Australian citizen – a citizen, it must be said, who owns no natural gas reserves, nor hectares of pasture, nor LNG facilities.

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I cannot, with any real certainty, predict the future. It's ridiculous that this government continues to ask opinions from everyone except climate scientists. These people, trained to answer such questions, are continually ignored on both state and federal levels. We should have climate scientists at the forefront of this movement, not drowned out by baseless comments from those who are not qualified climate scientists.

## 9. Resilient infrastructure and business

1. What are the key climate risks for the primary industry or resources sectors?
2. Do you currently assess the impact of physical climate risks on your business, assets or infrastructure?
3. Is there information which would assist you to do this better?
4. What are the best ways to enhance the resilience of public and private infrastructure?

The worst possible outcomes from a lack of meaningful action on climate change will reshape society as we know it and the flow on effects will impact us at every level - including in the primary industry and resource sectors. No one is immune. At present this is catalysing the need for the industries - in particular the resource sector - to extract at a high rate as they face an uncertain future. This runaway train is fuelled by panic. The resource sector knows it is their eleventh hour, and yet is investing in increasingly unstable and unviable extraction projects in order to ballast their bottom line while they have the opportunity to do so. This increases the environmental impact of such sectors and is likely to only benefit the companies in said sectors.

The best way to enhance resilience of private and public infrastructure is for the state government to actively reduce WA's emissions. Climate change must be at the centre of all government decisions and they must ensure and effectively implement strong regulations on industrial polluters

## 10. Protecting biodiversity

1. Can existing land use and biodiversity management practices be modified to reduce vulnerability and improve resilience?
2. Are there opportunities for new collaborations with landholders or communities to address climate risks and improve biodiversity outcomes?

The most meaningful action to ensure that the biodiversity of our state is maintained is to actually take action to ensure we avoid the worst impacts of climate change through rapidly reducing our emissions in this state. Instead the Government is asking the public questions that can only be answered by academics and professionals. It would prove much easier for the government to ask such experts, rather than place the future of our biodiversity in the hands of a concerned, yet underqualified citizenry.

## 11. Strengthening adaptive capacity

1. Are there gaps in the availability of adaptation knowledge, climate information or skills for your community, organisation or sector?

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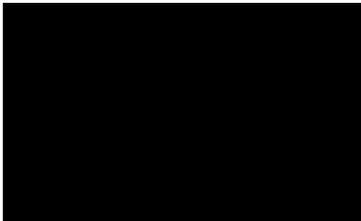
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2. How can these be addressed?
3. What are the main barriers to the adoption of effective climate change adaptation?

A declaration of a climate emergency and, subsequently, a meaningful action plan on achieving zero-emissions in a reasonable, scientifically-evidenced timeframe would allow for the development of information and skills for the community. Touched on elsewhere, the government-championed lack of transparency in projects such as the Burrup expansion; the lack of concrete, tangible information for citizens-as-stakeholders; these are the gaps in the availability of knowledge. Does the average Karratha resident understand how much water has been requested to fulfil the needs of the expansion? Does the government? Again, to pander to constituents with some a facetious question reveals a distinct lack of will on behalf of the government. To restrict information whilst also calling for transparent information is bewildering.

I thank you for the opportunity to give comment and it is my hope that in the new year we see some – *any* –genuine action from our state government. We, as a global community, face unprecedented trials ahead and I sincerely hope we find ourselves on the right side of history.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon Robin Chapple MLC  
**Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region**  
**29th November 2019**