

AUSTRALIAN WATER

ASSOCIATION

21 November 2019

Mike Rowe
Director General
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Locked Bag 10, Joondalup DC
WA 6919

CC: Minister for Environment, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
Minister for Water, Hon Dave Kelly MLA

Dear Mr Rowe,

RE: Climate Change in Western Australia Issues Paper

The Australian Water Association is Australia's biggest water network inspiring and driving a sustainable water future through the sharing of information and knowledge, connecting members with industry and stakeholders, and inspiring positive change.

The AWA has an active advocacy program in areas that impact the Australian water industry and we welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the **Climate Change in Western Australia Issues Paper**.

In our advocacy work, we too have identified addressing climate change as a key challenge to secure Australia's water future (AWA Discussion Paper - [Emerging challenges and opportunities to secure our water future](#) May 2017). Climate change has also been recognized by the United Nations in their Sustainable Development Goal SDG13 – 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact'. We acknowledge the recognition of this issue by the Government to address climate change and its impacts to develop the State Climate Policy, and support the commitment to provide due consideration of the issues arising from climate change going forward.

On review of the **Issues Paper**, we would like to provide some broad level feedback on the content and intent of the document, rather than responding to the individual questions (some of which are as framed difficult for an Association to respond to). Overall, our feedback relates to ensuring the outcomes of this process lead to strategic, holistic thinking around Climate Change both in relation to changing practices that lead to climate change, and managing the existing and potential impacts from climate change, now and into the future.

5000+

individual members across the whole water cycle

600+

corporate members from utilities, science and research, energy and resources, manufacturing and agriculture

100+

water utilities servicing more than 20 million customers

50+

years servicing the water sector

Australia's biggest water network connecting members through information, networking and recognition

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We offer the following general comments for your consideration:

1. We feel that the water-energy nexus has not been adequately considered or addressed within the Issues Paper. Water and energy are inextricably linked – these factors are linked to liveable towns and cities, and a prosperous state economy. The paper seems to concentrate largely on the energy sector and carbon emissions aspect as the primary contributors to climate change, but this is only one element of the much wider issue. Other aspects including urban design and planning, population growth and resource management (including water) are not directly discussed. While water efficiency is mentioned it is on a local lot scale only, not the broader resource scale. Liveability is touched on but again only in a local lot scale perspective.
2. The specific intent of this consultation is not clear – the document provides a list of themes and relates them to a low-carbon future. We feel that climate change and its impacts will not solely be addressed by this single measure. Low carbon is a lag-indicator and it would be desirable to have some interim targets to prioritise efforts and measure progress.
3. Under theme 5 Waste Reduction, Wastewater as an important contribution not considered in the Government’s target of “75% of waste generated in Western Australia is reused or recycled by 2030”. Wastewater reuse is an important action to theme 7 Water Security, beyond efficiency and addressing the impacts of reduced Gnamptu groundwater allocations for liveability and the economy.
4. In the event that zero emissions are achieved, the result may be that climate degradation is halted. However, it is unlikely that this will have any immediate reversal of the effect or impacts already seen. As the paper highlights, Western Australia is already seeing impacts of climate change that need to be considered now. These impacts will likely increase further before zero emissions is achieved; we need to continue to adapt, plan for and manage the impacts of this change, alongside working towards zero emissions and other approaches that work to halting climate change.
5. The paper addresses the 11 themes as individual components, rather than a cohesive overarching approach. It also mentions a number of strategies and plans that have been progressed to respond to individual themes (i.e. electric vehicle strategy under Future Mobility). It is hoped that the proposed State Policy resulting from this consultation process will bring these components together under a single umbrella as a whole of government approach, which clearly identifies and links all strategies and components of the wider issue to manage.

The Association sees the Climate Change Issues Paper and proposed State Policy as an excellent opportunity for WA to take a national leadership role to encourage a comprehensive response to climate change. A response that tackles the challenges head-on and shows innovation and leadership in a holistic approach that deals with the significant impacts we, and future generations, face in Western Australia.

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AWA would be pleased to discuss these issues further with DWER and continue to provide input to better understand the issues and opportunities in both the water and wider climate change space. We would also like to draw your attention to our extensive work in this area (see attachment 1).

Should you wish to further these discussions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



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Attachment 1 - AWA recent publications relevant to Climate Change

- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – Discussion Paper](#), May 2017
- [Emerging challenges and opportunities to secure our water future – Discussion Paper](#), May 2017,
- [Water Security for All Australians – Discussion Paper](#), May 2016.