



# WACSSO

Partnering with P&Cs to  
advance public education

## WACSSO SUBMISSION

*The response of Western  
Australian Schools to  
Climate Change*

# Acknowledgments

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations pays respect to First Nations and Traditional Custodians throughout Australia, recognising their connection to land, waters and sky.

We acknowledge parents, families, Elders and communities as sharers of culture and knowledge; and recognise the value this learning holds for children and young people.

## Acknowledging Parents

WACSSO acknowledges parents<sup>1</sup> as the first educators in their child's life. We celebrate and honour the diversity of families and recognise the vital role they play in supporting children and young people throughout their learning journeys.

WACSSO prepared this submission with the help of Western Australian public school parents, Parents and Citizen Associations (P&Cs), school staff and school communities. We particularly want to thank those parents who have shared their experiences regarding the response of WA schools to climate change.

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1 WACSSO recognises the term "parent" to also include a child's primary carer.

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# Who is WACSSO

The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc. (WACSSO) is the peak body representing parents of public school students in Western Australia. For over 100 years, WACSSO has provided services and representation at State and National levels to more than 660 Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs). WACSSO is primarily a volunteer organisation made up of a President and State Councillors (representatives) from geographically based electorates. As such, the Organisation has a wide representative reach across the state. WACSSO uses our strong networks with parents, carers and stakeholders in public education to inform our advocacy efforts.

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# Introduction

Climate change is a significant threat to humanity, and one that all members of society must acknowledge and take immediate action on before it is too late. The need for change and innovation has never been more important to safeguard our young people's future. The Department of Education and Western Australian schools are not immune to this need for change, collectively having a significant environmental impact. Schools have the capability to face the issue head on by substantially reducing their ecological footprint. In addition, schools as places of learning and community are perfect for setting standards and provoking change that will reverberate through students' lives as they become the leaders of tomorrow. To equip students with the skills, knowledge, and experience essential for students thriving in the future, schools must be places that encompass sustainability in all their functions. To ensure our young people are not left behind, this transformation must happen immediately.

The benefits of climate change action in schools go far beyond reducing carbon emissions and making schools more sustainable. They give schools the opportunity to implement exciting new initiatives that have the potential to transform schools and education, whilst solving problems that burden school communities. In addition, it equips students with the skills to be active and empowered members of their community.

Support from government is essential to transform Western Australian schools into spaces that act on climate change and promote sustainability, whilst reaping the substantial benefits of these actions for students and the school community. Government will play a huge role in facilitating these changes by removing barriers that can deter climate change action and resourcing initiatives that encourage climate change action in school communities. We ask the Western Australian Government to be at the forefront of climate change action and to provide leadership to help transform schools and school communities into the sustainable spaces they need to be to give our young people the best opportunities.

This submission is divided into four sections, addressing the terms of reference provided by the Education and Health Standing Committee.

## 1.0 The co-benefits of climate change action in schools

Implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives within schools offers a unique opportunity for co-benefits for school communities. Benefits are available in a wide range of areas and show climate change action not to be a burden, rather an opportunity.

### 1.1 Family Engagement

A powerful co-benefit of many climate change action initiatives is the way they engage families with their child's education. The Commissioner for Children and Young People *Supporting student wellbeing in WA schools discussion paper* highlights that "working closely with families and developing positive working relationships" is a key enabler for student wellbeing and achievement<sup>1</sup>. Climate change action in schools help form the links needed to support parent engagement. In a recent WACSSO survey sent to parents and carers, one respondent encapsulated this perfectly, saying:

*"While as parents, we were thinking about setting up expanded recycling (container deposit, recycle, etc rather than just our yellow council bin) and other sustainability actions within our home, it has been our child who has talked and asked about the actions they are doing at school and then this has prompted us as parents to set these up in our own home to reinforce what he is learning at school. This flow on effect is precisely why these actions being initiated in schools is so important."*

The flow on effects of this type of parental engagement in education are substantial, as they facilitate important links between students, parents and schools. Research has consistently shown that parental involvement in a child's education substantially improves a student's academic achievement, wellbeing and productivity. The Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY) report *Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research* highlights that "resourcing and effectively progressing parental engagement initiatives is warranted, if not essential to education reform and the future of Australia."<sup>2</sup>

### 1.2 Student Wellbeing

The effects and lack of action on climate change is undoubtedly a significant burden on the wellbeing of young Australians. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) *A Climate for Change: 2019 Young Ambassador Report* revealed climate change as a 'spotlight issue'; meaning it is "over-arching in its importance and interrelationship with the others [issues] – one that children and young people generally believe will play a defining role in their future."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps one of the more sobering findings of the report was that whilst 86% of young Australians saw climate change as a threat to their safety, there was a strong view that older generations were failing to act by safeguarding the future. Consequently, young people feel threatened by climate change and powerless to act, heightening anxiety to the detriment of their wellbeing.

Supporting students to engage in sustainability initiatives aids in addressing negative wellbeing factors associated with climate change, as it offers them agency. Young people need to know they are not powerless in combating this global issue and showing students how they can make a difference, however big or small, will help. A recent WACSSO survey highlighted that 65% of respondents (parents and carers) believed student wellbeing benefitted from climate change action in schools.

The Victorian Government ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) program implements sustainability across the school facilities, community and curriculum. It is an excellent example of how climate change action in schools can promote positive student wellbeing<sup>4</sup>. A study of the program revealed being at an RSS school made students feel:

- happy that their school cares about helping the environment;
- proud that their school cares about the future;
- safe and healthy, knowing that their school maintains a clean green environment;
- motivated to care for nature, wildlife and the environment beyond school;
- engaged and connected to nature by being outdoors; and
- empowered by having a voice, taking action, and making a difference.

These positive outcomes are highly encouraging and strongly support student wellbeing as a co-benefit to climate change action in schools.

Climate change action also has clear links to physical wellbeing co-benefits for students. Programs like Your Move and the facilitation of active transport promotes students to be physically active whilst reducing the carbon footprint associated with being driven to school.

### 1.3 Links to Learning

There is tremendous opportunity to link climate change action to all stages of schooling, from kindy to senior high school. Sustainability initiatives come in all shapes and sizes, meaning they are easily adaptable to various forms of learning and have the capacity for simple and complex adoption within the curriculum. In addition, sustainability has been highlighted by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) as a cross-curriculum priority, meaning it's essential that Australian students are familiar with these ideas. Using school sustainability initiatives to embed the practical teachings of sustainability offers a huge opportunity to engage students in the curriculum whilst addressing climate change.

A global response to climate change is reliant on education. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning is at the core of this response, whether learning about the problem, coming up with solutions, or creating new systems and technologies. Increasing a focus on sustainability in the STEM curriculum offers a co-benefit by addressing climate change and preparing young people for the future, with knowledge of sustainable practices becoming increasingly valuable.

Incorporating a sustainability focus in STEM offers a unique opportunity, as these initiatives can be contextualised at a school/community level. In this way students have opportunities

for real life learning linked to the STEM curriculum. The positive impacts of sustainability related STEM initiatives are visible in Western Australian schools (see Case Study 1) – we see a vast potential for growth in these programs.

### **Case Study 1**

Albany Senior High School’s marine science project is an excellent example of the co-benefits of linking climate change action with the STEM curriculum. Students collect valuable baseline data to help sustainably manage the fish and marine invertebrate populations in the Albany region. Students will work together to collect and analyse the data whilst gaining valuable knowledge and promoting stewardship of the local aquatic environment. The project engages students in STEM concepts and immerses them in practical elements relating to their geographic surroundings whilst promoting sustainable practices.

Climate change action also has great potential to be incorporated within the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). The Australian Curriculum’s rationale for HASS outlines, “through the Humanities and Social Sciences, students become well placed to contribute to Australia’s ideas of a cohesive society, sustainable environment, productive economy and stable democracy.”<sup>5</sup> Sustainability projects and programs in schools give students firsthand practical experience of these concepts. Waste reduction initiatives are a great example of this, as they teach students to analyse school systems and come up with solutions to address wastage. This, in turn, benefits the school financially and takes action on climate change. Similar value can be found in other school sustainability initiatives as they are often based around concepts like waste reduction, recycling and the circular economy, which can be incorporated when making practical links to the curriculum.

The opportunity for Vocational Education Training (VET) career pathways in sustainable industries is increasing as climate change action becomes ingrained in commonplace thinking. Several sustainability-related VET courses currently exist, including home energy efficiency, horticulture, conservation and environmental management. These courses are based around practices which exist within sustainability initiatives in schools, meaning these initiatives can give students the opportunity to engage practically with VET subjects. Furthermore, sustainability initiatives in schools introduce students to these practices and foster interest in such subjects, which can help inform future career pathway decisions.

The opportunities offered by hands-on, real-life learning linked to climate action are enormous. Students disengaging with learning is a problem for the school system. Students often lament the lack of practical application and perceived relevance of the subjects they are enrolled in. WACSSO believes that schools being supported to integrate local climate action with curriculum outcomes has significant capacity to fire the imagination and increase the relevance of subjects for students. There is also the very real possibility that local projects will receive much needed support from school students through the integration of learning with local issues.

## 1.4 Future Industry/Workforce Opportunities

Climate change action is increasingly becoming a part of day-to-day life as sustainable industries and sustainable practices within sectors continue to grow. Exposing students to such practices offer co-benefits of addressing climate change whilst introducing them to future industry and workforce opportunities. The recent report by the Business Council of Australia *Achieving a net zero economy* revealed a similar co-benefit for climate change action and the Australian economy, with the mission to reach net zero estimated to increase GDP by \$890 billion and create over 195,000 jobs<sup>6</sup>. In addition, The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a 27% increase in renewable energy jobs in 2019 from the previous year and a 120% increase in these jobs over the last 10-years<sup>7</sup>. By acknowledging climate change action as a growing industry, the education sector has a unique opportunity to address climate change and prepare young people for future workplaces.

## 1.5 Community Building

A feature of many climate change action initiatives in schools is their ability to foster school communities and instil a sense of pride for students, parents, teachers and school staff. A recent WACSSO survey highlighted that 58% of respondents believed community building was a primary benefit of school climate action. In addition, a study of the Victorian Government ResourceSmart Schools showed the following<sup>8</sup>:

- 86% agreed that RSS helped schools to develop a positive school community;
- 72% agreed that RSS helped schools to engage with parents and families;
- 68% believed that there was a moderate or major direct link between RSS activities and the wellbeing of the students and teachers in their school; and
- 59% agreed that RSS helped to support students experiencing difficulties.

The benefits of having an engaged school community are significant; it strengthens schools, increases educational outcomes and promotes positive wellbeing to everyone within the community. School-based climate change initiatives can promote these outcomes whilst addressing the issue at hand – this is an incredibly valuable co-benefit.

### Case study 2

Halls Head Education Support Centre is an excellent example of a school implementing climate change action and receiving the co-benefit of fostering a connected community. The school engages in several sustainability projects as part of its Sustainability Priority 2018- 2023 strategy; these all support its mission of inclusivity. A specific project is the school's native tree planting initiative; one of its objectives is to plant one tree for every student in the Peel region. The project addresses the issue of climate on both an individual student level and a broader community level within the Peel region. The teacher running the sustainability program said, "it resonates with all of our school community who believe students can actively make a difference to the world by simply planting a tree or simply being kind."

Another co-benefit of climate change action within school communities is the potential to create links between secondary schools and their primary feeder schools. For example, in the case study above (case study 2) the school engaged various primary schools in the area,

encouraging student leaders to join in on the school's tree planting climate change action initiative. The formation of these early links between primary and secondary schools assists in the Year 7 transitional period that can be challenging for students and families.

## 1.6 Financial Impact

Implementing sustainability-conscious technologies, programs, services, and infrastructure in schools will often benefit schools financially, by either saving or raising funds. Examples of such initiatives include the Solar Schools Programs, Containers for Change, installing rainwater tanks and conducting a school energy audit. Implementing initiatives like these across the state has the potential to free up school finances and substantially reduce the collective carbon footprint of Western Australian schools.

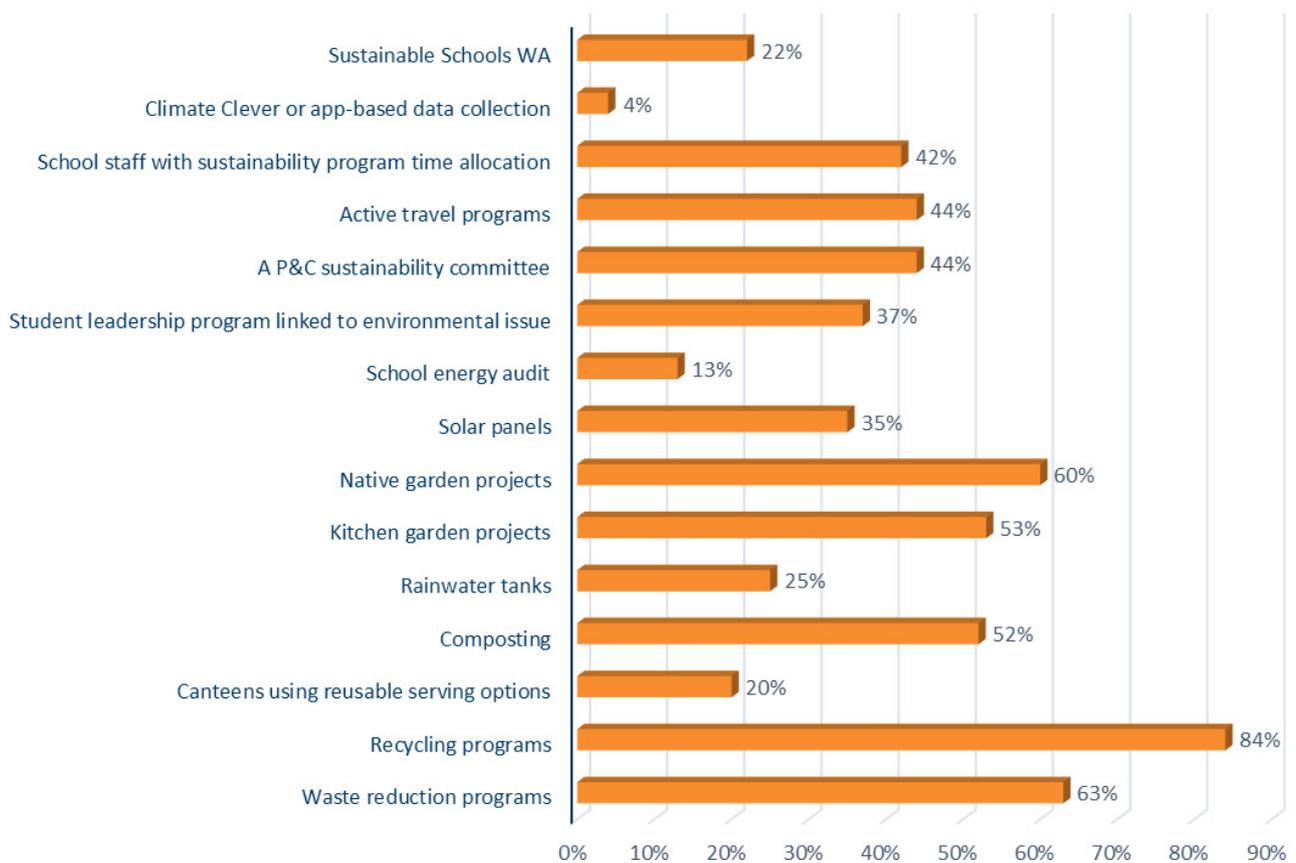
Energy audits are a great first step for schools to assess how sustainable the school was with its energy usage. The energy audit results then inform the schools' decisions, allowing action on energy wastage, which benefits both school finances and the environment. Despite energy audits being an excellent starting point for sustainable initiatives, our recent survey highlighted only 13% of respondents said they were aware of their school engaging in an energy audit, whilst 75% wanted one conducted in the future. The low uptake of energy audits should be taken as an opportunity for schools to reap the co-benefits of this sustainable initiative.

*“Students should be encouraged and supported to be community activists and drive change within and outside of school. Schools (principals and staff) need to see their impact on the environment as a central issue and not something separate or unimportant. Teachers need to be able to model environmental responsibility to their students. They can be equipped to make good decisions by having staff / student committees incorporating science teacher’s knowledge or bringing in a ‘local expert’.”*

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

### 2.1 Survey responses

WACSSO recently sent out a survey to our network. In this survey we asked respondents to outline the sustainability initiatives their school community was involved in; we received the following responses:



### 2.2 Benefits of these actions

Most sustainability initiatives will have clear primary benefits, such as reducing waste, saving power, teaching students about a specific sustainable practice, promoting physical activity, or any benefits easily associated with those initiatives. These initiatives also tend to have broad benefits that they collectively promote on a system-wide level.

In our recent WACSSO survey we asked parents to highlight the broad benefits associated with climate change action in schools, respondents highlighted these benefits (% of respondents):

1. Students experience real life learning opportunities (95%)
2. Reduction in waste (92%)
3. Education on climate change & action (86%)
4. Improved school grounds and facilities (75%)
5. Student mental health (65%)
6. Financial savings for the school and education system (60%)
7. Community building activities (59%)
8. Student physical health (48%)
9. Staff wellbeing (46%)
10. Strategic planning for school boards (32%)

These results clearly show that amongst parents there is a strong acknowledgement that climate change action in schools is profoundly beneficial. These benefits are wide-reaching and apply to students, staff and parents on both an individual and community level.

More research will need to be conducted to grasp fully the extent climate change action benefits all members of a school community. WACSSO would like to see consistent and comprehensive reviews of these initiatives, so we truly understand the widespread benefits of sustainability initiatives. We call on the Western Australian Government to conduct studies regularly and make information readily available. This will help school communities understand the benefits sustainability initiatives will bring to schools and encourage implementation of effective programs.

## 3.0 Barriers that schools encounter in undertaking climate action and how these can be addressed

### 3.1 Barriers encountered when undertaking school climate action

Climate change action within Western Australian schools is often halted by various barriers. These barriers are mostly related to resourcing, time allocation and ideology – all of these issues can be readily addressed to facilitate climate action in schools. Feedback from parents highlight the following barriers that school communities face when trying to implement climate change action.

*“It would be great if schools could be examples of how to reduce emissions and be more sustainable. It would be great if individual schools didn’t have to reinvent the wheel and implement projects from scratch and if there was a centralised location/personnel that they could get specific guidance and support from.”*

### **3.1.1 A lack of government funding needed to support sustainability initiatives**

Implementing sustainability initiatives in schools can often be resource intensive, meaning some schools do not have the funding. A school's engagement in these initiatives can be impacted by the ability to provide the essentials; if a school is struggling to do this, sustainability may not be considered a funding priority.

All schools must have the funding to provide the essentials for students. In addition, the Western Australian Government must provide additional funding on a needs basis to support sustainability initiatives so all students have access to the benefits that come with these initiatives.

### **3.1.2 A lack of volunteers to support initiatives**

Sustainability initiatives are often reliant on the work of volunteers. The nature of volunteering means many volunteers have other responsibilities, so it can be hard to retain a consistent time commitment to such initiatives.

To address the inconsistencies of volunteer time allocations to sustainability programs, schools must support these initiatives and commit staff time allocations to climate change action. This staff allocation may not necessarily be needed regularly; however, when volunteer time is scarce, school staff should be supported to step up. For example, during the P&C handover period, when there are changes in leadership. These changes can often mean sustainability projects that the P&C administers get put on hold whilst they find their footing. It is situations like these when support is needed from school staff.

### **3.1.3 No school staff allocated to sustainability**

The time allocation of school staff is often stretched thin. Subsequently, it is understandable that schools do not always have the staffing resources to engage in climate change action. The clear benefits that sustainability initiatives offer to student learning and to school communities supports greater investment in school staff time allocation to such initiatives. The Western Australian Government can confirm its commitment for genuine climate change response in schools by resourcing additional staff time allocation. Additional funding will properly resource the implementation and maintenance of sustainability initiatives, teachers to develop locally relevant sustainable educational activities and staff to undertake new projects. Increased staff allocation to areas relating to sustainability will enable schools to have greater involvement in climate change action by ensuring that projects are supported by staff dedicated to these initiatives. Additional allocation of staff time to climate change action would be a clear statement by the Government that it endorses widespread implementation of climate change action initiatives in schools.

### **3.1.4 A lack of access to a sustainability expertise**

A common feature of schools with excellent involvement in climate change action initiatives is the presence of sustainability champions within the school community. These tend to be people with extensive knowledge of sustainability and a drive to assist their school community in implementing these practices. Whilst these sustainability champions are great for school communities that have them, many schools do not, subsequently reducing their capacity to act on climate change. The Western Australian Government must provide schools with access

to expert skills and knowledge to ensure all schools have the opportunity to engage with best practices in sustainability methodologies and the associated benefits that this access enables.

### **3.1.5 Climate change action negatively politicised in school communities**

The depiction of climate change as a political issue can make school communities hesitant to implement initiatives that combat the problem for fear it might cause division. Feedback WACSSO has received from parents indicates that a vast majority would like to see climate change action in schools. However, there is still a minority who are opposed to climate change action. Consequently, for fear of creating conflict, school communities may opt out of engaging in such initiatives.

For an increase of school communities engaging in climate change action to occur, it is crucial that they feel supported and confident that they will not be drawn into divisive politics. The State Government must facilitate this by providing a strong voice for climate action in schools and ensuring school communities know that they have the complete support of the Department of Education.

### **3.1.6 School regulations impeding on climate change action**

Much of the climate change action within schools is based on infrastructure and other building projects; a series of approval processes generally accompany these projects. Many of these processes are necessary to ensure the success and safety of a project, however, there are occasions where such regulation can cause unnecessary barriers. These barriers are often significant deterrents for climate change action in schools. With resource and time allocations stretched thin, school communities can be put off by needing to navigate regulations.

#### **Case study 3**

In the case of Mosman Park Primary School, the P&C tried tirelessly to arrange and fund solar panels for the school but faced barriers every step of the way. The school community indicated that the annual power bill was a high cost for the school. The P&C offered to help as they had adequate funds to pay for solar panels for the school. Initially, the P&C was required to engage in a feasibility study, which they indicated was a lengthy process. There was also uncertainty about regulations surrounding who could be hired for the study. Following this hurdle, they were required to receive project approval from multiple government departments. In addition, the government funded Solar Schools program was announced, so there was uncertainty whether the school was eligible for funding; if this was the case, the P&C could not justify funding the project. These barriers stacked on top of each other ultimately led to the project being put on hold, with no guarantee whether the school would have solar panels in the near future.

The Western Australian Government should review approval processes relating to implementing sustainability initiatives in schools and assess any regulations that may put unnecessary stress on these projects. In addition, it would be helpful if the approval process for projects was clearly outlined, with assistance being given to school communities navigating these procedures.

### 3.1.7 Sustainable School Canteens

School canteens are often run by P&Cs. Over a number of years many canteens have moved away from heat and serve options to producing more fresh, locally responsive food on sites. These changes require staff upskilling and often also requires different equipment. Often the standard oven is not large enough to accommodate baking on site or the number of burners is insufficient to prepare soups, stir fries and pastas in large pots.

School canteens are now facing phasing out the use of single-use plastics in 2021. While P&C committees and school communities are excited to be part of these changes, they need support to understand what their options are. P&Cs seeking to move to reusable serving containers face significant establishment and maintenance costs for the provision of reusable serving containers. Many canteens rely on the hand washing of dishes, and even when they have a dishwasher they are rarely of sufficient size, speed and capacity to cope with a transition to all reusable serving dishes.

## 4.0 What more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change

### 4.1 A system-wide approach to embedding sustainability in schools

#### 4.1.1 Resourcing sustainability in schools

For climate change action to be embedded across the various facets of Western Australian public schools, adequate resourcing is needed.

*“In our school, everything we have done has come from our community and staff volunteering. It would be amazing to see sustainability as part of each government’s school planning for the future. Not just in teaching kids about it but also in school operations. For example, we added solar panels to our School but this should be mandatory. Composting, recycling and waste reduction should be mandatory. Ordering school supplies that are made from recycled products should be mandatory. It all adds up.”*

The Western Australian Government must increase funding allocations to specific sustainability projects like solar panels or wind power in schools. Projects must be funded equitably, and the rollout of this funding should have the scope to extend to all public schools in the State. We understand some schools may benefit from projects more than others, often determined by factors such as geographical location. These factors should not limit a school’s ability to engage in climate change action, so funding must remain flexible to ensure schools can engage in the sustainability pathway that best fits their school community.

The implementation of climate change action in school communities is usually contingent on time allocations available from staff and community members; much of this is volunteer time. By giving schools greater resources, in the form of staff with dedicated time to sustainability

projects, schools would feel more capable of participating in various initiatives. Increased staffing would also reduce the burden felt by volunteers taking on the responsibility of school sustainability projects. If they were unable to fulfil their usual duties for any reason, a staff member could step in to help.

A common feature of schools that strongly engage in sustainability initiatives is having a community member who is a sustainability champion. These people with excellent knowledge of sustainable practices and are eager to see these implemented in schools. Unfortunately, not every school community has such a member, reducing their capacity to engage in this space. A possible solution is for the Department of Education to employ and provide sustainability experts dedicated to different regions to assist schools in implementing climate change initiatives. These experts would give school communities access to a sustainability consultant when a local champion is not in place.

#### **4.1.2 Government funded state-wide school energy audit**

Western Australian schools potentially waste vast amounts of energy every day through poor energy saving practices and infrastructure. This amounts to a considerable waste of school finances and a significant impact on their carbon footprint. To address this issue, relevant government departments must either resource or mandate state-wide school energy audits. Allow schools to assess their energy usage practices and act accordingly to save and redistribute finances and reduce their carbon footprint. In addition, implementing energy saving strategies allows the school to engage in practical components of sustainability within the curriculum, as discussed in section 1.3. Following these energy audits the Western Australian Government must continue to support the implementation of solutions to address energy wastage concerns.

#### **4.1.3 Building sustainable schools**

When a new school is designed, or an existing school is under renovation an important window of opportunity arises to incorporate sustainability in the building process. Infrastructure and design can have a large effect on the energy, water and resource consumption of a building. To promote system-wide implementation of sustainability the school sites themselves must also be sustainable. Therefore, whenever a school is built or an infrastructure project is undertaken, the Western Australian Government must ensure the designs reflect sustainable practices. These designs should be informed by modern sustainable architectural practices and take in account local climate factors to give the school the best chance at being sustainable.

A program should be undertaken to upgrade canteens where schools are attempting to use more locally grown ingredients and cook from scratch to reduce packaging and waste, and where they find the existing infrastructure does not support these changes. In particular a program of supporting the dish washing requirements of a move to fully reusable serving dishes will be required to support canteens to make a full transition away from single use containers and cutlery options.

#### **4.1.4 Creating sustainability networks between schools**

Sustainability initiatives within schools can often be very insular, meaning multi-school networks are fragmented despite implementing the same or similar projects and ultimately sharing the same goal. We believe the creation of Western Australian school sustainability

networks would be a step in the right direction, fostering valuable networks that promote and support sustainability initiatives in schools. We see how strong community networks within individual schools tends to correlate with high involvement in sustainability initiatives. Creating a similar network between different schools has the potential to offer the same benefits and would encourage Western Australian schools to take collective action against climate change.

#### **4.1.5 Adopting sustainability practices to all areas of education**

The growth of sustainability within all aspects of society demands that young people are experienced and educated in these concepts. To prepare our young people for the future, we must ensure their education is synonymous with sustainability, which includes the curriculum, school infrastructure, VET courses, access to technologies, and more broadly, the environment in which they learn. Government departments and education stakeholders must take a holistic approach when implementing sustainability in schools. Only then will we see students reap the full benefits of these initiatives and ensure they are prepared for a future reliant on sustainability.

### **4.2 Extensive data gathering**

More resources need to be allocated to gather data on how schools engage in climate change action to understand the success of these initiatives. Once the relevant data is obtained the Department of Education will better understand where schools are at in dealing with climate change. Understanding what's working and what needs improvement will help make informed decisions on the allocation of resources. This should be regularly revisited as the needs of school communities change.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

All nations, governments and communities have a critical role to play in climate change. The Western Australian Government has made steps towards sustainability and clean energy initiatives in schools, our members are calling for these initiatives to be built upon and expanded into other areas. The Western Australian public school system is perfectly placed to model best practise in addressing climate change in both the large-scale (system wide) and small-scale (locally based) initiatives and programs. To address the climate crisis genuine resourcing of sustainable projects, the creation of sustainability networks within schools, the involvement of school communities, the support from all levels of government and a system-wide approach to sustainability for education is required.

WACSSO thanks the State Government for conducting this inquiry into the climate change action of Western Australian schools. We call upon the Government to provide leadership to Western Australian schools by supporting swift action against climate change.

This submission gives testament to the concerns and hope of parents and our members to see the implementation of climate change action in schools. As we look to solutions to solve this global threat P&Cs, parents, students and school communities are excited by and committed to the range of opportunities for real action. Student learning and outcomes go hand in hand with all efforts to address climate change. Students' futures are the driver of our commitment to seeing and supporting climate change action in Western Australian schools.

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