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COVID-19 RECOVERY

An Opportunity to Invest in an
Environmentally Sustainable Future



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

EIANZ Western Australian Division

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the “once-in-a-generation” economic stimulus measures provide an opportunity to prioritise projects that progress the State’s policies for a low-carbon and circular economy future, providing sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits for generations to come. However, there is a risk that short-term thinking will turn back the clock on the pathway to a more sustainable future for Western Australia.

IANZ-WA

The Western Australian Division of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (IANZ-WA), the leading professional association for environmental practitioners in Australia, encourages a roadmap to recovery that is underpinned by good policy, science and which looks to invest in long-term environmentally sustainable projects that will ultimately have an economic multiplier effect for the State.



IANZ-WA has identified *Four Pillars to Responsible Economic Recovery for an Environmentally Sustainable Western Australia*:



01

INVEST IN THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND REGULATION



02

INVEST IN LONG-TERM LOW-CARBON PROJECTS



03

INVEST IN WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY STRATEGY



04

INVEST IN WA’S NATURAL AMENITY

Invest in the Maintenance and Enhancement of Environmental Standards and Regulation

Western Australia’s well established statutory environmental framework not only aims to protect the State’s natural environment for future generations, it also makes it an appealing jurisdiction for investors¹, with well-documented requirements and expectations providing a high level of certainty and stability. As we see a shift in investors towards companies and jurisdictions with better records on environmental, social and governance issues² it is fundamental that any economic stimulus works to enhance environmental outcomes. To achieve this, the Western Australian Government should look to:



Increase resourcing of key agencies:

Under-resourcing of key decision-making authorities continues to result in extended timeframes for evaluation of new projects. Investing in skilled environmental practitioners, capable of assessing new Projects efficiently, will assist in kick-starting the economy, without comprising environmental protection.



Streamlining assessment processes:

The Streamline WA initiative should be placed back on the agenda as a priority for improving regulation and regulatory practice and minimising duplication across government agencies.



Developing robust regulatory instruments:

Clear, unambiguous guidance, standards and regulations, support the efficient and appropriate assessment of project approvals. Now is not the time to roll-back legislation, but to provide the necessary clarity to ensure industry understands the rules of environmental governance. A proper review of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* should be undertaken and duplicative requirements under other Acts should be removed to ensure one clear set of environmental legislation guides decisions in Western Australia.



Invest in Long-Term Low-Carbon Projects

Western Australia’s rich array of renewable resources provides the unique opportunity to invest in projects that will reduce our carbon footprint, providing a competitive advantage in the low-carbon economy as well as a significant source of economic development, diversification, jobs and skills³. There is mounting evidence showing that spending on renewable programs stimulates growth and creates jobs as effectively as environmentally neutral or harmful programs⁴, while also addressing the urgent requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At a time of unprecedented urgency to halt the social, health and environmental impacts associated with climate change, economic stimulus measures should target:

Finalisation of the Climate Change Policy:

Release of a climate change policy to set the framework and a roadmap for long-term investment in low-carbon technology.

Major Infrastructure to Diversify Energy Supply:

Renewable energy asset diversification, including expansion, implementation and prioritisation of key components of the WA Energy Transformation Strategy, Renewable Hydrogen Strategy and Future Battery Industry Strategy.

Expansion of the Low Emissions Energy Development Fund to encourage innovation, research and delivery of new technologies.



Low Emissions Transport:

Renewable energy asset diversification, including expansion, implementation and prioritisation of key components of the WA Energy Transformation Strategy, Renewable Hydrogen Strategy and Future Battery Industry Strategy.

- Strategic urban planning that reduces the need for private vehicle travel.
- Financial incentives to support the uptake of low-emission vehicles.
- Acceleration and deployment of infrastructure to support low-emissions transport such as an extensive EV charging network across the State, commercialised electric public transport and freight transport, expansion of cycleways and walkways.

Construction Standards:

Create incentives for higher construction standards and energy-efficient equipment installation in residential and commercial developments.

Invest in Waste Management Infrastructure and Implementation of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy

The WA Government has emphasised the importance of improving waste management practises through implementation of the WA Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2030. The economic stimulus should be utilised to fast-track key aspects of the strategy to advance WA towards a more circular economy. This will provide opportunities for the creation of local jobs and establishment of sustainable waste management practises that ultimately reduce waste production and increase material recovery. The WA Government should prioritise:

Implementation of waste management reforms that will progress achievement of the 20% reduction target in waste generation per capita by 2030. ⁵

Invest in infrastructure that will expedite and increase material recovery to 75% by 2030 and recover energy from residual waste including accelerated deployment of the Container Deposit Scheme.

Create economic incentives for industry to make changes to their design and productions to reduce waste streams.

Continued support of projects and research that encourages a circular economy in Western Australia and also removal of regulatory hurdles to implementing these projects (e.g. WaterCorp partnering with Hazer Group for the production of renewable hydrogen and graphite from wastewater).





Invest in WA's Natural Amenity

The sustainable management of our natural ecosystems as tourism destinations should be a focus of economic stimulus. Without a doubt, WA's natural environment is one of the State's most valuable assets. In 2018-2019, tourism contributed \$12.2 billion to the Gross State Product and employment of over 600,000 people⁶. The magnificent resource of our natural environment and the local employment opportunity it provides needs to be intact when our borders are again open to interstate and international tourists. With the increased unemployment brought on by COVID-19, there is an opportunity for government-funded training and deployment of jobseekers to help manage some of the key threats to our environment such as weeds, dieback, feral pests, pollution and fire. This should include a focus on engagement of Indigenous peoples and businesses. Additionally, the WA Government should prioritise investment in Projects that invigorate and expand the eco-tourism market across both the low and high-end markets, offering low impact, low emission developments, inspired by a symbiotic and sustainable existence with the natural environment at the world-class destinations we have on offer including Rottnest Island, Ningaloo (Coral Bay) and the broader Southwest and Kimberley regions.

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2. Responsible Investment Association Australasia. 2019. Responsible Investment Benchmark Report 2019 Australia <https://responsibleinvestment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RIAA-RI-Benchmark-Report-Australia-2019-2.pdf>
3. Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, 2019. Climate Change in Western Australia. Issues Paper - September 2019. https://consult.dwer.wa.gov.au/climatechange/issues-paper/user_uploads/climate-change-in-wa_2019.pdf
4. McKinsey & Company, May 2020 "How a post-pandemic stimulus can both create jobs and help the climate" <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Sustainability/Our%20Insights/How%20a%20post-pandemic%20stimulus%20can%20both%20create%20jobs%20and%20help%20the%20climate/How-a-post-pandemic-stimulus-can-both-create-jobs-and-help-the-climate.ashx>
5. Waste Authority, 2019. Waste Avoidance and Resources Recovery Strategy 2030. https://www.wasteauthority.wa.gov.au/images/resources/files/Strategic_Direction_Waste_Avoidance_and_Resource_Recovery_Strategy_2030.pdf
6. State Tourism Satellite Account 2018-19 <https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Publications%20Library/Research%20and%20reports/2020/Ad-hoc/State%20Tourism%20State%20Satellite%20Account%202018-19%20WA%20Summary.pdf>

