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## **As climate change bites, WA community unites for clean jobs and emissions reduction - launch of the RenewWA statement on climate change**

An extraordinary alliance of Western Australian community organisations is demanding an immediate reduction in carbon emissions and increased investment in non-polluting, job-creating industries and carbon offsetting in the state.

Launching a combined statement on climate change and the future direction of the Western Australian economy the RenewWA alliance of faith groups, farmers, trade unions, health workers, social services, environment groups and others called on the State Government to take advantage of the renewables boom and for WA's largest polluters to offset their greenhouse gas emissions.

The statement, launched on Cottesloe Beach and signed by more than 30 community organisations, points to significant opportunities for job creation and economic development in offsetting the high carbon emissions from WA's gas industry and the growing world market for clean energy.

President of UnionsWA, Steve McCartney said that the necessary move away from carbon polluting industries did not mean economic downturn or a loss of jobs. "Any changes for carbon-intensive industries bring risks and opportunity. Currently the risks are carried by the workers and the biggest companies aren't taking responsibility," he said. "We want to make sure that opportunities are created for workers to have long term, good quality, cleaner jobs, and that there is a just transition to get to that point."

"This will require companies and government investing in new industries, paid training, support for keeping jobs in communities, and most of all putting workers at the centre of decisions they make. Only in this way will there be a just transition to a low-carbon future."

Goomalling farmer and director of Farmers for Climate Action, Christie Kingston, supported the statement saying that, despite the resilience of the agricultural sector, changing climate patterns were already impacting on its productivity.

"Climate change impacts worsen with every fraction of a degree warming, making it harder for us to sequester carbon in our soils and landscapes, produce food and fibre, look after our land and contribute to rural economies.

"Global heating *must* be minimised. WA needs a 1.5c compliant emissions reduction plan to help create the brightest possible future," she said. "Farmers are more aware of changes to climate than most and we are already seeing carbon neutral farms in WA, farms with net zero emissions by 2030 goals and farmers who are committed to climate-smart agriculture. There is huge potential for rural economies and jobs in carbon offsets, and the development of ecosystem services industries."

Moderator of the Uniting Church Western Australia, Rev Steve Francis argued a major discrepancy between the WA Government's new target of net zero emissions by 2050 and its support for a massive expansion of the gas industry. "We need a credible plan to reach that target. Just because we are people of faith doesn't mean we have a blind faith that leaves climate action to the last minute, a problem for someone else to solve.

“To meet our responsibilities under the United Nations’ Paris Agreement we need to see emissions coming down immediately with clear, science-based interim targets being set. Unfortunately, the troubling reality that continued expansion of the gas industry means we are still seeing WA’s emissions rising, jeopardizing even our national commitments.”

Honorary Secretary of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Dr Richard Yin said, “Both around the world and in Australia, the health sector understands climate change to be a public health emergency that requires our urgent attention. The required action is to rapidly reduce our emissions. Yet WA's emissions continue to rise, driven largely by our LNG sector.

“This summer we have seen the impacts of a warming climate with the unprecedented fires over east that have impacted both human health and the natural world. Further warming will increase the frequency of such events. We must stop fuelling further fires and do our part in reducing our emissions along timelines consistent with the science.”

The group were also keen to ensure that people in the community with the least capacity to adapt to climate change and extreme weather events are not left out of consideration in the State Government’s climate policy.

CEO of the WA Council of Social Service, Louise Giolitto said, “Climate change is already impacting the people made most vulnerable in our community. For people who are sleeping rough, for people struggling to pay the bills, when you throw in another heatwave or cold snap, it pushes people to their absolute limit. The State Government’s climate policy needs to ensure that we are doing our fair share to both support those most at risk and working towards rapidly reducing our emissions contributing to the climate crisis.”