GOV-015 Environmental Impact Policy and Plan

Applies to:	**PWDA Workers and Volunteers**
Effective from:	**29 May 2025**
Review date:	**28 May 2027**
Version:	**v1.1**
Last updated:	**29 April 2025**
Policy approver:	**Governance Advisory Group / Board**
Policy owner:	**Chief Executive Officer**

Contents

Purpose

- To set out PWDA's commitment to protecting the environment
- To outline how PWDA will work to identify and address climate change risk at every level of our organisation.
- To minimise the environmental impact, including the carbon footprint, of our internal operations.
- To promote environmental sustainability and sound environmental practice in all of our operations.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Board Directors, employees, independent contractors, subcontractors and consultants (collectively "workers")
- all volunteers and students (collectively "volunteers").

Background

This policy supports compliance with the **Australian Council for International Development** (ACFID) **Code of Conduct**, which sets standards for ethical practice in international development and humanitarian work. We have added to the process by also developing an **Environment Impact Plan** (the Plan) to:

- help us embed low-carbon behaviours across PWDA
- minimise our environmental impacts
- achieve our stainability goals
- reduce our costs, risks and liabilities
- improve our reputation and performance.

Policy Statement

Climate change is a global priority issue that presents an immense risk to the health and wellbeing of the human population and the natural world on which it relies.

People who experience cultural, economic, institutional, political, social or other types of marginalisation are more vulnerable to climate change.

PWDA is committed to minimising its impact on our environment and continually improving our environmental performance. We are also committed to work that addresses the impacts of climate change on people with disabilities.

We will fulfil our commitments through:

Governance and Strategic Integration –

- ensuring the PWDA Board embeds climate risk governance into its foundations, processes, and structures
- making environmental sustainability an integral part of PWDA's organisational governance
- incorporating climate risk into PWDA's risk management, strategic and business planning
- developing and implementing a PWDA **Environmental Impact Plan**.

Culture, Responsibility and Training –

- fostering a safe and healthy workplace that supports environmental responsibility
- building an environmentally aware organisational culture, where responsibility is clearly assigned and understood
- providing education and training to workers and volunteers to support environmentally responsible practices
- enhancing awareness by motivating our workforce to take action on environmental sustainability.

Operational Responsibility, Engagement and Continuous Improvement –

- acting responsibly to report and correct incidents that impact health, safety, or the environment
- conducting regular evaluations to continually improve environmental performance

- maintaining open and honest dialogue with workers, volunteers, and stakeholders on our environmental performance
- promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability across PWDA, to stakeholders, partners, and the broader community
- engaging with stakeholders to understand their climate action priorities and align with partners working in the climate space.

We are also committed to managing our activities to minimise our impact on the environment and climate by:

- reducing the consumption of natural resources in our daily operations, including water, paper and energy
- maximising the recycling of resources with access to more colour-coded split recycling bins
- disposing of waste appropriately via paper recyclers, including e-waste
- minimising pollution by taking steps to limit carbon emissions resulting from vehicle and air travel such as purchasing carbon offsets
- making sure our procurement processes are ethical, including only using suppliers with high standards of environmental performance
- regularly assessing the environmental impact of our operations
- reporting to the PWDA Board, members and other stakeholders on environmental sustainability and impact achievements (e.g. Annual Report).
- ensuring that all actions to reduce environmental impact are **evidence-based**, **equitable and inclusive**.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Alignment –

PWDA's environmental impact approach is guided by Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles. These provide a globally recognised framework for assessing non-financial performance and help ensure our sustainability work reflects both our organisational values and international best practice.

PWDA applies the "5 P's of ESG" to embed sustainability across all areas of our operations:

- **Purpose** – aligning our environmental efforts with PWDA's mission of equity and inclusion
- **People** – centering the rights and experiences of people with disability, workers, volunteers, and communities
- **Planet** – minimising our environmental footprint and protecting natural resources
- **Prosperity** – promoting long-term organisational resilience and environmental responsibility
- **Principles** – ensuring ethical governance, transparency, and compliance with environmental regulations.

In applying these principles, PWDA also aligns its work with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly:

- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

For further guidance, PWDA refers to the ESG resources provided by **Standards Australia**, which outline the strengths and limitations of various environmental reporting frameworks and support the adoption of measurable, ethical, and accessible sustainability practices. See: [Standards Australia ESG Project](#)

Definitions

Action: in this context, encompasses any project, development, undertaking, or other activity that may have environmental consequences.

Action management plan: a plan for managing the impacts of an action

Carbon footprint: the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by an individual or organisation's actions.

Climate action: actions taken to reduce the overall climate risks that communities, economies and ecosystems are facing, including activities that support adaptation,

environmental restoration and mitigation. These activities may relate to an organisation's operation, programming or policy / advocacy work.

Climate change: refers to any long-term trends or shifts in climate, which may be due to natural variations or caused by human activities changing the composition of the atmosphere.

Climate justice: Climate justice is a concept that addresses the fair sharing and equitable distribution of the impact of climate change and responsibility for its mitigation. It recognises that vulnerability to climate change can reflect existing structural injustices in society, and that climate action must address these imbalances.

Environment: is defined as:

- ecosystems, including people and communities
- natural and physical resources
- qualities and characteristics of locations, places, and areas
- heritage values of places
- social, economic, and cultural aspects related to the above.

Environmental sustainability: is making decisions and taking actions that minimise harm to the environment and people through ensuring the environment is not degraded beyond its capacity to maintain critical ecological processes.

Mitigation: refers to actions taken to avoid, reduce, or remedy any significant impact on the environment.

Off-sets: actions taken to compensate for impacts on the environment.

Significant Impact: is when an action is likely to cause substantial adverse effects on the environment including living things and habitats.

Roles and Responsibilities

PWDA Board

The PWDA Board holds **primary responsibility for overseeing and verifying compliance** with this **Environmental Impact Policy** and ensuring climate risk is effectively managed across the organisation.

In line with the **ACFID Code of Conduct**, the Board will:

- integrate climate risk governance into its core responsibilities, structures, and decision-making processes
- actively monitor implementation and compliance with this policy, including through regular reporting and performance review
- establish appropriate governance mechanisms (e.g. subcommittees or delegated roles) to ensure ongoing oversight and accountability
- ensure environmental sustainability and climate risk are embedded in PWDA's strategic planning, risk management, and resource allocation.

Reporting and Oversight

Board

The PWDA Board will ensure effective oversight of this Environmental Impact Policy through structured reporting and accountability mechanisms. These include:

- Regular reporting from the CEO or delegated staff on climate-related risks, progress against the Environmental Impact Plan, and environmental performance metrics
- Inclusion of environmental risk and sustainability in Board and relevant subcommittee agendas (e.g. risk, audit, or governance committees)
- Annual review of the Environmental Impact Policy and related plans, including assessment of effectiveness, compliance, and areas for improvement
- Delegation of operational responsibilities for policy implementation, while maintaining ultimate accountability for compliance and governance.

Chief Executive Officer

Is responsible for:

- maintaining awareness of climate change risks and ensuring PWDA's systemic and individual advocacy and any other relevant programs include a

focus on addressing the factors that cause people with disability to have increased vulnerability to climate change.

- the oversight of operational measures to address the impacts of climate change
- reporting to the Board on progress, issues and successes relating to the PWDA Environmental Impact Plan.

Senior Manager Corporate Services

Is responsible for:

- the development, implementation and ongoing review of operational measures to address the impacts of climate change including:
  - o ensuring information is available for workers to assist with their understanding of this policy and the important role they play in PWDA's responses to climate change
  - o establishing and coordinating a working group to develop and be responsible for implementing the PWDA Environmental Impact Plan.

Leaders

Are responsible for:

- implementing and adhering to environmentally sustainable practices in the PWDA Environmental Impact Plan.
- making sure workers and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to this policy and to reporting any incidents or concerns
- ensuring that volunteers and contractors who fall within the scope of this policy are aware of how the policy affects their role.

Employees

Are responsible for:

- implementing and adhering to this policy and following the Environmental Impact Plan
- reporting any incidents or concerns to their Leader so that prompt action may be taken.

Resources

- Climate risk governance guide. An introductory resource for directors on climate risk governance – Australian Institute of Company Directors: https://www.aicd.com.au/content/dam/aicd/pdf/news-media/research/2021/climate-risk-governance-guide-web.pdf
- ACFID Good Practice Toolkit: https://acfid.asn.au/good-practice-toolkit/

Related Documents

Legislation, regulations and standards

- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)
- All relevant Commonwealth, state, territory, and local laws, regulations and policy regarding environmental protection
- National Disability Services Standards
- Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct
- Climate Change Act 2020.

PWDA Policies

- PWDA Risk Matrix (and controls)
- Procurement, Purchasing and Contracts Policy
- Employee Travel and Expenses Policy
- Directors Allowances and Expenses Policy and Procedures
- Motor Vehicle Policy
- Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy.

Environmental Impact Plan 2025-2027

Assessment

The first step in developing the Plan will be to map out PWDA's activities and break them down into components, which will allow for a proper tactical and strategic approach to the process.

We will then conduct an environmental assessment of these activities and related processes. This will involve identifying and measuring the sources and types of environmental aspects and impacts, such as emissions, waste, water use and energy consumption.

We will also evaluate any legal and voluntary obligations we may have and how we conform with regulatory, ethical and standard trends.

The assessment will help us to understand our baseline performance, identify existing gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

Objectives

Our assessment results will help us define our environmental objectives and targets, and should be SMART:

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- relevant
- time bound.

Our objectives will also align with PWDA's Strategic Plan and our stakeholder expectations.

Targets will quantify desired outcomes with KPIs set for each objective, as well as timeframes for completion, for example, increasing our recycling rate by 50% by 2027.

Actions

In developing the actions for the Plan, we will assess the resources needed to achieve our objectives and targets. This will involve identifying and prioritizing the environmental aspects and impacts that we can control or influence, and developing strategies and measures to prevent, reduce, or mitigate them.

We will also assign roles and responsibilities, allocate budgets and timeframes and establish procedures and protocols for implementing, monitoring and reporting on our actions.

Implementation

We will execute the Plan by putting our actions into practice. This will require communicating and engaging with our workers, volunteers and other stakeholders, and providing them with the necessary training, guidance, and support.

We will also ensure that we have the appropriate equipment, tools, and systems to carry out our actions effectively and efficiently.

Monitor progress

We will monitor our progress and evaluate PWDA's performance against the objectives and targets outlined in the Plan. This will involve collecting and analysing data and information on our environmental aspects and impacts.

We will also conduct regular internal audits to track how we are going and communicate findings and feedback to the workers, volunteers and stakeholders. We will also seek their input and suggestions.

Review and improve

Monitoring results and feedback will enable us to improve the Plan. This will involve identifying and acknowledging our achievements and successes and also addressing any challenges and shortcomings.

Each year we will update and revise the objectives and targets in the Plan, along with the strategies and measures, to reflect changes in our internal or external environments.

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Ultimately we will be striving for continuous improvement and innovation.

Overview of projects completed in 2025

Hybrid working arrangements

The flexibility of these arrangements has enabled employees to regularly continue to work from home, reducing pollution caused by commuting.

PWDA Intranet

Launched in 2025, this project has considerably reduced our digital pollution by decreasing the number of emails sent for making announcements, sharing news updates and sharing documents, which are now housed in team hubs that can be accessed by all employees at all times. This is a significant change when one e-mail emits 10 g of CO2, and up to 60% of our inbox emails are unopened.

Working towards a paperless office

As more workers have utilised online applications for document creation, sharing and storage we have seen a sizeable drop in printing and paper consumption through:

- utilising paperless options such as DocuSign eSignature
- document cloud storage
- digital meeting papers and presentations
- online document collaboration
- digital invoices
- electronic receipts for purchases.

Move to new office

The new Surry Hills office comes with impressive environmental credentials, including a 5.5 NABERS rating for energy and water for the building, with integrated environmental compliance and enhancement into property management processes. PWDA offices have large windows and energy efficient lighting as well as motion sensor lights that reduce energy consumption, and we use a waste hierarchy system to reduce landfill. The building also has a green energy provider, a reduced emissions HVAC system and low flow toilets.

- **Green kitchen**

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We provide non-disposable cups, glasses and cutlery for workers to use and recycle coffee pods back to the supplier. The appliances are energy and water efficient. We also use non-disposable cleaning cloths and opt for eco-friendly cleaning products.

- **Reducing consumption**

  With the 3 Rs concept in mind (reduce, reuse, and recycle), we choose to repair laptops and other devices before making new purchases. We recycle equipment when repair is not possible.

Action Management Plan

Note: 2025 data to be incorporated in early 2026 to create a baseline measurement for future performance.

Stage 1 - Assessment

Action	Person responsible	Completion date	Checklist	Notes
Create PWDA activities list				
Break down activities into components				
Decide which activities will be assessed				
Calculate carbon footprint activity components				
Review travel for all workers				
Calculate travel emissions				
Assess and record levels of waste				

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Assess and record current levels of paper consumption				14
Review energy options with building management				
Incorporate this Policy and Plan into induction programs				
Assess areas of energy consumption				
Recruit workers for Environmental Champions				
Review options for incorporating carbon off-sets across PWDA				
Invite workers and other stakeholders to contribute to the Plan				

Stage 2 - Areas for Improvement and Goals

To be drafted following completion of Stage 1 above.