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To cite this article: Naomi Joy Godden, Bronte Alston, Kylie Wrigley, Shajimon Peter, Julie Nyanjom, Graham Hansen, Raphaela Raaber, Janine Joyce, Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett, Mehran Nejati, Doreen Wijekoon, Katharine Marsh, Caroline Porteous & Susan Bailey (10 Aug 2025): Community Service Organizations and Actions for Climate Justice: An Exploration of the Western Australian Context, *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, DOI: [10.1080/23303131.2025.2534150](https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2025.2534150)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2025.2534150>



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Published online: 10 Aug 2025.



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Community Service Organizations and Actions for Climate Justice: An Exploration of the Western Australian Context

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ABSTRACT

This study utilized Feminist Participatory Action Research in collaboration with community service organizations (CSOs) in Western Australia to assess knowledges, capacities and capabilities regarding climate justice. Through surveys, interviews, and workshops, CSO workers explored organizational responses to climate change and social justice. Participants self-reported a low-to-medium understanding of climate justice and a desire for capacity building, especially in decolonial practice. Half of participating organizations had policies regarding climate change and social justice and engaged in climate advocacy, but identified a lack of sectorial and organizational leadership. Participants recommended opportunities for CSOs to operationalize climate justice and disaster resilience via climate justice mainstreaming, partnerships and collective activism. CSOs prioritized co-producing a *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit* as a social innovation to embed climate justice and disaster resilience across CSO operations. This demonstrates the significance of collaboration in addressing the social injustices of climate change and fostering innovative outcomes for CSOs.

KEYWORDS

Climate change; climate justice; community service organizations; human service organizations; social innovation; Western Australia

PRACTICE POINTS

- Community service organizations (CSOs) in Western Australia (WA) require enhanced knowledges, capacities and capabilities in climate justice and disaster resilience.
- Barriers to CSO engagement with climate justice include lack of time, resources, funding, heavy workloads and competing demands, and low organizational prioritization of climate justice.
- WA CSOs request tools and resources for innovative approaches to infuse climate justice, disaster resilience, and decolonization across all areas of programming and operations.

Introduction

Climate change poses an existential threat to society which transcends geographical, jurisdictional, and sectorial boundaries. Although climate change is often framed as an environmental issue, it is also

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a social one (Levy & Patz, 2015). As articulated by scholars such as Osborne (2015), Porter et al. (2020), Parsons et al. (2024) and Sultana (2022a, 2022b), the concept of climate justice recognizes the oppressive systems of power that underpin climate change – such as colonialism, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy – and that people who already experience systemic disadvantage are most affected by climate change yet least responsible for causing it. These scholars call for structurally transformative responses in climate change mitigation (preventing climate change through emissions reduction), adaptation (taking action to cope with climate impacts) and disaster resilience (disaster preparedness, response and recovery). As the social justice impacts of climate change come to light (see, for example, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023; Weeramanthri et al., 2020), the community service sector is increasingly implicated in responses to climate change, and is challenged to adopt a climate justice approach.

In Australia, community service organizations (CSOs) predominantly serve communities who experience marginalization and structural disadvantage (Victorian Council of Social Services [VCOSS], 2019). These communities are also disproportionately impacted by climate change (Wijekoon et al., 2024). CSOs often have insight into the acute and insidious impacts of climate change, including:

confronting and harrowing stories of the lived experience of both extreme events such as heatwaves, fires, and floods, as well as the more subtle, but eroding implications of a changing climate, such as food and fuel costs, and housing (Porter et al., 2020, p. 304).

A significant 2013 study identified that the Australian community service sector was highly vulnerable and unprepared for climate change (Mallon et al., 2013). Given CSO service users tend to face additional exposure to climate change impacts in tandem with an attenuated capacity to respond, the vulnerability of the sector can exacerbate climate impacts on service users (X. Chen, 2022). However, Mallon et al. (2013) also found that CSOs were willing to implement mitigation and adaptation strategies if sufficiently supported. Beyond this report, the knowledge, capacity and capability of CSOs to adapt to climate change or engage in action for climate justice has been very minimally examined to date, internationally or in Australia.

Climate change *adaptation* refers to minimizing the impacts of climate change (Levy & Patz, 2015). Different conceptualizations of adaptation – and their resulting actions – are present in climate literature. Reactive adaptation responds to the acute impacts of climate change rather than anticipating or planning for future climate change scenarios, which is easily conflated with *disaster resilience* (Howes et al., 2013). Moving beyond disasters, Future Earth Australia (FEA) envisions “just adaptation” as an approach which aims to tackle intersecting injustices in response to the climate crisis (FEA, 2022). The authors argue that climate decision-making must include and center “the voices and experiences of diverse stakeholders across areas of marginalization” to foster empowerment and agency (p. 5). Therefore, climate solutions for just adaptation should co-innovate with the communities who are most affected by the impacts of climate change.

Manzini and Meroni (2014) define social innovation as “a process of change. . .to achieve socially recognized goals in a new way” (p. 363). Some examples of social innovation processes include user-centered, human-centered, and community-centered participatory design which consider the needs of users throughout the design process (E. Chen et al., 2019; Ding et al., 2025; Manzini & Meroni, 2014; Villari, 2021). Morjaria et al. (2013) emphasize the potential of a “lead user method” (p. 1) which proactively designs social innovations based on the needs of *future* users “as opposed to current and typical ones” (p. 1). Lead users should be actively involved in the design process. To anticipate the needs of lead users and devise solutions accordingly, in the context of CSOs and climate justice this approach requires nuanced insight about 1) who is most at risk of the impacts of climate change, and 2) the specific barriers and opportunities for social innovation. However, as mentioned above, peer-reviewed literature which explores CSOs and climate change is currently very limited.

This article responds to this gap by examining how CSOs in Western Australia (WA) engage with climate justice and disaster resilience. We discuss feminist participatory action research (FPAR) with

WA CSO staff and volunteers to understand current knowledges and practices about climate change and social justice in WA CSOs, and collectively identify and implement actions to strengthen organizational structures and practices to facilitate climate justice in the WA community service sector. Through participatory cycles of action and reflection, we found that CSOs in WA wish to engage more with climate justice and disaster resilience with some appetite for transformative and decolonial approaches. Participants identified a range of actions CSOs could undertake regarding climate justice and disaster resilience, which culminated in the initiation and development of a social innovation tool. The *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit (2025)* aims to support the WA community service sector by guiding CSOs through a transformative processes of embedding climate justice principles across their governance, operations, programs, and advocacy. This article posits that CSOs are well-positioned to be involved in social innovation, particularly in relation to the involvement of CSO service users (and their respective Lived Experiences) as “lead users” for the design of just climate solutions.

Theoretical framework

This study examines the role of CSOs in a changing climate from a critical climate justice perspective. Climate justice is a framework that highlights the nexus between climate change, social inequality, and structural violence (Osborne, 2015). Climate justice reveals how communities who have the least responsibility for causing climate change are most exposed to its impacts and have the fewest resources to adapt (Porter et al., 2020). It also highlights how maladaptation arises when systemically marginalized communities are excluded from adaptation and mitigation policy and planning decisions (Forsyth & McDermott, 2022).

Critical climate justice draws on feminist, decolonial, and other critical theories to explain how climate change is exacerbated by (and caused by) the intersections of oppressive power structures such as colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, which leads to discrimination based on intersecting gender, ethnicity, class, disability, age, and geographic identities (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Osborne, 2015). Critical climate justice critiques neoliberal and (neo)colonial systems which harm people and planet, arguing for decolonizing climate responses and research (Sultana, 2022a, 2022b). Decolonization involves reconnecting with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Garvey et al., 2021), which are significant drivers of planetary health (Redvers et al., 2022). More than a political process of returning land, decolonization entails restoring respectful relations with the land (Whyte, 2019).

Not all climate justice is critical or decolonial and there is a dissonance between theoretical and practical applications to climate justice (Newell et al., 2021), which complicates the development of tangible actions and policies (IPCC, 2023). Seeking to bridge the gap between climate justice theory and practice in the community service sector, this article uses critical climate justice dimensions as an analytical framework to locate climate injustices within the community service sector’s remit and guide more fair and equitable social innovations in the form of community engagement processes, services and policies. Scholarship conceptualizes multiple climate justice dimensions pertaining to: who is involved in responses and decision-making (procedural justice); who is disproportionately affected by climate injustices (recognitional justice); how they are affected (distributive justice); how their rights are violated (intergenerational justice); how they are compensated for harm or losses (corrective justice); and how social and institutional power structures are rebalanced for equity and fairness (transformative justice) (Juhola et al., 2022; Newell et al., 2021; Parsons et al., 2024).

The dimensions outlined above have some resonance with social innovations by the community service sector mentioned previously. For example, procedural justice aligns strongly with user-centered design principles as target individuals or groups are involved in decision-making throughout the design process (Manzini & Meroni, 2014). Distributive justice also echoes the intentions of social work innovations, as both seek to effect transformative social and structural changes to improve peoples’ lives with effective and appropriate program delivery and resource distribution. With our

theoretical framework established, next we discuss the inequitable impacts of climate change and how CSOs in Australia respond to them.

Literature review

The IPCC (2023) recognizes that structural inequities increase the vulnerability of some communities to climate change. The geographic distribution of climate stress and disasters exposes low-income countries, island nations, small farmers, and poor urban, rural, and remote communities to climate risks and losses, particularly in communities that lack resources for adaptation. Environmental changes profoundly affect First Nations Peoples whose cultures and wellbeing are deeply connected to place (Lebel et al., 2022; Vecchio et al., 2022). Globally, extreme weather events such as floods, fires and droughts lead to displacement, loss of livelihoods and infrastructure, and food insecurity (IPCC, 2023), and exacerbate gendered inequalities and violence (Pearse, 2017). Climate change adversely impacts human health; causing or exacerbating mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Nicholas et al., 2020), while pollution, poor air quality, and increasing temperatures aggravate cardiovascular and respiratory conditions (Squires, 2023). Low socio-economic households experience additional economic pressures to supply and finance cooling and heating (Gyamfi & Opoku, 2021).

Given these inequalities, communities on the frontlines of climate impacts often have limited resources for implementing climate mitigation and adaptation strategies (Walker & Mason, 2015). CSOs are seemingly in a position to support communities affected by climate change, connecting them with vital services, resources and advocating for climate justice and disaster resilience. However, an Australia-wide study suggests the community service sector is not prepared for climate extremes (Mallon et al., 2013). The study found that Australian CSOs are “highly vulnerable and not well prepared to respond to climate change or extreme weather events” (Mallon et al., 2013, p. 4). Notably, 25% of surveyed CSOs were likely to never reopen if exposed to an extreme event due to the impact on physical infrastructure. The study also identified barriers to adaptation such as insufficient funds and lack of information and skills, as well as the view that climate adaptation is beyond their core scope. However, if adequately supported and resourced, CSOs also expressed “the desire and the potential to contribute to client and community resilience to climate change impacts” (p. 122). The authors suggest that:

if well prepared, [CSOs] have inherent skills, assets and capabilities to contribute to community resilience to climate change and in response to disasters. These include the ability to educate, contact, locate and evacuate vulnerable people with specialist needs; specialist skills such as counselling, case management and volunteer management; and specialist assets and facilities such as disability transport (Mallon et al., 2013, p. 4).

Since Mallon et al. (2013) study, internationally and in Australia there has been significant rise in community and health sector reports and frameworks regarding climate change. Our review of them highlights that the community service sector has a clear role in climate and disaster responses, and a growing appetite for climate justice.

CSOs role in climate justice and disaster resilience

CSOs can respond to climate change in numerous ways. CSOs can reduce emissions by transitioning to renewable energy, retrofitting low emissions technologies, and divesting from financial institutions that invest in fossil fuel extraction (Climate and Health Alliance [CAHA], 2021; FEA, 2022). However, CSO actions must also move into adaptation to respond to climate change appropriately and effectively from a justice lens which requires strong leadership, strategic direction and operational focus (CAHA, 2021; Tonmoy et al., 2020). For example, the Darebin Neighborhood House Network’s (DNHN) *Climate Action and Resilience Plan* (DNHN & CJP, 2022) explicitly incorporates both mitigation and adaptation strategies to foster sustainable and resilient neighborhood houses and communities.

CSOs must understand community strengths, vulnerabilities, and hazards in their unique contexts. Existing international literature suggests that CSOs can undertake risk assessments, forecasting and planning methods to prepare for climate change (Tonmoy et al., 2020; Walker & Mason, 2015); including hazard mapping, timelines, impact chains, and vulnerability matrices (CARE, 2019), intersectional gender-based analysis (Oxfam Canada, 2021) and problem tree analysis (UN Women, 2015). The Australian Red Cross [ARC] (2017) offers a *Climate-Ready Communities* guide with worksheets for individuals and groups to develop communication plans and have values-based conversations, as well as checklists to support disaster resilience at the individual, household, and organizational level. Other literature also suggests integrating climate action into organizational frameworks and processes such as leadership statements, recruitment (e.g. position descriptions and contracts), training, and governance (Bertals et al., 2010; Dunn et al., 2022; Taylor-Bragge et al., 2021).

In broad strokes, Australian CSO-targeted information tends to use language centered on “risk” and “resilience.” Notably, the *Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit* (Australian Council of Social Services [ACOSS], 2015) is an online website which supports CSOs to first benchmark existing resilience, take actions to identify and manage risks (e.g., purchase insurance to offset risk, prepare a *REDiPlan*), and then reevaluate resilience in comparison to the benchmark score. Although this toolkit can assist CSOs to manage climate change risks, it does not emphasize climate justice by addressing the root causes of climate injustices. However, building upon the *Community Sector Climate Change Declaration* joint statement in 2021 (ACOSS, 2021), the Australian community service sector has now developed “a Blueprint Framework for Fair, Fast and Inclusive Climate Change Action” (ACOSS, 2024, p. 2) which is oriented toward structural change. This framework provides direction about what CSOs should demand from governments in their advocacy.

Other existing tools and frameworks focus on *recovery*, including the *Recovery Capitals* (Gibbs et al., 2022; Quinn et al., 2021) and *Care Through Disaster* (Australia reMADE & Women’s Health Goulburn North East [WHGNE], 2023). Although these resources extend beyond a risk management approach, they still focus on crisis contexts. By emphasizing collective care, essential needs, longer timescales, and community reconnection, the *Care Through Disaster* framework situates climate justice within the scope of community service organizations.

Lastly, the Jesuit Social Services’ Centre for Just Places (CJP) has a co-designed collaborative action framework to mobilize climate justice and resilience within community health and CSOs in western Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (Dunn et al., 2022). This framework (Figure 1) is the only identified example of an explicit use of the term “climate justice” in the context of CSOs in Australia. CSOs are also encouraged to enact climate justice through ongoing community engagement and place-based approaches, such as practicing recognition of First Nations’ sovereignty (FEA, 2022), and co-designing and co-producing organizational frameworks, tools, policies and programs (CJP & City of Melbourne, 2023; Dunn et al., 2022). Further, public communication should be jargon-free and focus on everyday experiences to ensure relatability and relevance (CJP & City of Melbourne, 2023), with accessibility strategies such as accurate translations, tailored messaging and/or accessible formatting (Hansen et al., 2013).

Our review of CSO frameworks and actions, and the limited peer-reviewed publications to date, suggests there are numerous opportunities for CSOs to support climate justice and resilience. These opportunities include transformative and holistic innovations across CSO governance, programs, and advocacy. Importantly, responses will vary widely according to place, knowledges, capacities, and strategic leadership.

Colonial and neoliberal challenges for climate justice in community service organisations

Critical climate justice across all its dimensions will likely be difficult to enact in neoliberal and colonial contexts that CSOs operate in (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Ranasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2021). Neoliberalism prioritizes organizational and procedural legitimacy above community empowerment, prevention, and intersectorial action (Roussy et al., 2021). The “straitjacket of neoliberalism” is further tightened by disaster events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Andrew et al., 2020). Disaster

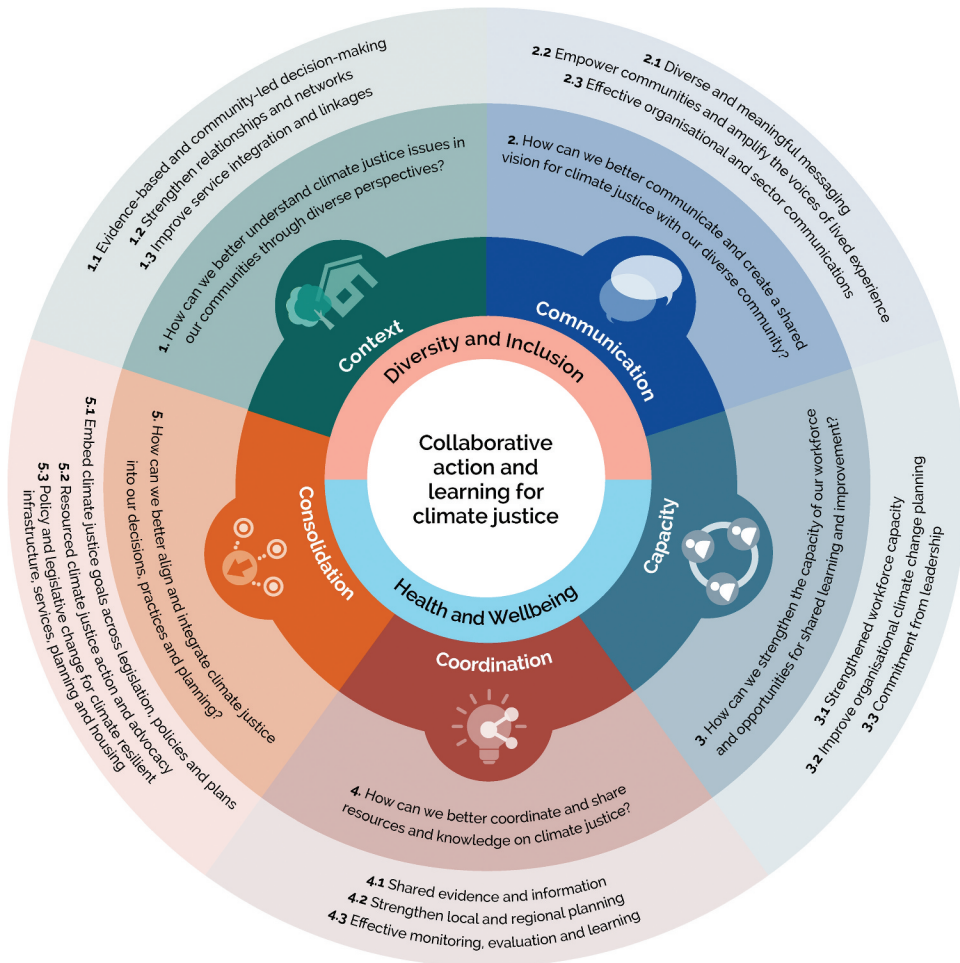


Figure 1. Framework for collaborative action and learning on climate justice (Dunn et al., 2022; shared with permission).

aftermath accelerates the pace of neoliberalism and perpetuates neocolonial policy due to acute urgency, crisis management, uncertainty, and lack of resources (van Heugten, 2018). Further to this is the ongoing challenge of fossil fuel polluters (and enabling governments) individualizing climate blame and responsibility, thus negating their structural and collective duty to prevent catastrophic climate change (Buse et al., 2022). As such, any attempts CSOs make to innovate climate justice responses will need to reckon with the colonial and neoliberal systems that drive structural injustices. CSOs in Western Australia are no exception.

Context of Western Australia

The state of Western Australia (WA) has a population of 2.7 million people and covers 2.5 million km², comprising one-third of Australia's landmass (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2022). Despite violent colonization commencing in 1829, there are approximately 89,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples living in WA, speaking more than 60 Indigenous languages. WA is a relatively wealthy state with a median weekly income of AU\$848 for individuals and AU\$2,214 for families (ABS, 2022). Comprising 10.7% of the Australian population, WA produces 17% of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions which continue to rise (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water [DCCEEW], 2021) and produces 4.5 times its share of the global

emissions budget (Climate Council of Australia [CCA], 2019). WA is extremely economically dependent on mining, and accounts for 12% of global LNG exports (Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation [DJTSI], 2023). It is described as a “captured state” due to the significant influence of the fossil fuel industry in WA politics and climate policy (350 Boorloo: Perth, 2020; Godden et al., 2022), which is fueled by climate denialism in Alt-Right media (Moser, 2024).

In WA, the inequalities of climate change are vast and multidimensional (Wijekoon et al., 2024). The recent *Climate Health WA Inquiry* (Weeramanthri et al., 2020) identified groups who were particularly at risk of climate injustices: children and youth, people with preexisting medical conditions including disability, women, older people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, low-income earners, people experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal Peoples, outdoor workers and farming communities, people living in rural and remote regions, people living in urban areas, and the prison population; along with emerging vulnerable groups of volunteers and first responders. Documented climate injustices in WA include injury and death, illness and mental ill-health, food and water insecurity, displacement and homelessness, family and domestic violence, financial stress and poverty, and exclusion and discrimination (Weeramanthri et al., 2020; Wijekoon et al., 2024). This is echoed in other Australian literature of the social justice impacts of climate change. Overheating and heatwaves result in dehydration, exhaustion, and circulatory disorders and may exacerbate existing health problems facing vulnerable peoples (VCOSS, 2019; Yenneti et al., 2020). Increased energy consumption from air conditioning increases financial stress for low-income households (Cornwell et al., 2016). During and after extreme climate events, incidences of family and domestic violence increase (Parkinson et al., 2015), mental health can deteriorate (Galway et al., 2019), and disaster responses can be discriminatory for First Nations, LGBTQIA+ and disabled communities (Gorman-Murray et al., 2017; Hansen et al., 2013).

In WA, CSOs are non-government human services that provide programs, activities, and infrastructure to address social justice issues. They include volunteer-led groups and small grassroots organizations operating at a local level, and medium-to-large organizations providing services and programs at local, regional, and state levels. WA Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is the peak body for the WA community service sector. WACOSS has a membership of more than 240 CSOs and 500 affiliate organizations in diverse fields of practice, such as Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing, health, housing and homelessness, substance use, poverty, family and domestic violence, food security, and disability. WACOSS understands that climate change exacerbates existing injustices while also significantly impacting CSOs’ capacity to appropriately and effectively support communities (WACOSS, 2022). Concerningly, Mallon et al. (2013) found that CSOs in WA were “less likely to have engaged in risk management, mitigation and transfer practices and were therefore less resilient to climate change and extreme weather impacts than organizations in other states” (p. 120).

In 2019, a group of WA CSO leaders approached social work researchers at Edith Cowan University (ECU) to commence a long-term program of research and action about climate justice and the WA community service sector. They formed a Steering Committee comprised of two ECU researchers and six CEOs and managers from diverse WA CSOs to co-produce and oversee the project. The Committee was concerned that WA CSOs are ill-prepared for the wide-ranging and structural impacts of climate change on communities and organizational operations. The Committee also identified that the sector must have a leading role in systemic climate justice advocacy. As such, a program of feminist participatory action research (FPAR) was collectively initiated to understand WA CSO experiences, capacities, and opportunities regarding climate justice. We now report the process and findings of the first cycle of FPAR regarding WA CSOs’ knowledges and actions for climate justice.

Methodology

WA CSOs and ECU researchers collaboratively undertook feminist participatory action research (FPAR) to strengthen the sector’s knowledge, practice, and collective action for climate justice. FPAR is a community-led approach to research and action that can be used as a political tool for

social movements and community organizations to develop and implement grassroots strategies for climate and ecosocial justice (Godden et al., 2020). Embracing a critical and decolonial theoretical lens, FPAR makes a political and ethical commitment to sharing power and prioritizes creative, collectivist practice (Hayhurst et al., 2015). FPAR situates research participants as “co-researchers,” subverting hierarchical conceptualizations of “researcher” and “subject” (Ewan, 2019; Fine & Torre, 2019). Co-researchers collaboratively undertake cycles of research and action, and actively participate in data collection, analysis, reporting, and activism for structural change (Chakma, 2016; Rix et al., 2020).

Importantly, FPAR is not a prescriptive methodological process. Rather, it involves iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to co-create knowledge through participatory data collection and analysis, and collectively implement actions to bring about social, political and economic change (De Oliveira, 2024). Different methods are chosen for the needs of each cycle and further cycles emerge out of each, thus FPAR is often nonlinear and unpredictable.

The project Steering Committee chose to undertake FPAR for its cyclical, participatory and iterative approach that integrates collectivist research and action toward a political goal. The values and practices of FPAR were considered appropriate in the community service context of tackling social injustices through community-based action. In its first cycle of FPAR, the Steering Committee wanted to 1) understand WA CSO literacy about climate change and social justice and, 2) identify and undertake actions to strengthen organizational structures and practices to facilitate climate justice in the WA community service sector. Reflecting FPAR values of facilitating social change (Chakma, 2016), the process prioritized consciousness-raising to deepen sector understanding about climate justice and generate community-led action. Steering Committee members were actively involved in designing methods, guiding data analysis, prioritizing actions, and identifying learnings through collaborative reporting. The project was approved by ECU’s Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number 2019–00630-GODDEN).

Methods

This exploratory study involved three methods: an online survey ($N = 57$), semi-structured interviews ($N = 7$), and two participatory workshops ($N = 28$). WACOSS promoted the study across the WA community service sector for people working in CSOs with a project information letter, and participants provided written consent for each method. The survey included multiple choice questions related to the social justice impacts of climate change in WA (reported elsewhere in Wijekoon et al., 2024); multiple choice questions about individual and organizational knowledge and practice related to climate justice; and, open-ended qualitative questions regarding opportunities to strengthen CSO actions toward climate justice. Some example survey questions include, “Does your organization have policies or procedures relating to social justice and climate change?”; “What is your level of understanding of the relationships between climate change and social justice?”; “What areas would you like to learn more about regarding climate change and social justice?”; and, “What suggestions to you have for how the WA community sector could engage in advocacy and action regarding social justice and climate change?”

Most survey participants ($n = 38$) were female, and the common age spread was between 25 and 65 years. The survey sample was largely white, with only two First Nations participants (Aboriginal), and three participants who identified as a person of color. Survey participants were more likely to be based in the city of Perth ($n = 37$), with the remaining in regional communities, mainly Bunbury. Over half of participants ($n = 30$) held positions of CSO leadership such as CEO, President, Director, Manager or Practice Lead. Thirty-three different CSOs and two universities were represented in the survey, with diverse fields of practice such as housing and homelessness, financial support, disability, First Nations’ wellbeing, domestic violence and sexual assault, youth, mental health, child welfare and care. Climate change was not a key focus for most participating organizations. Most CSOs worked in WA urban and regional ($n = 43$) areas, with only some in rural ($n = 17$) and remote ($n = 12$) areas.

Survey participants were then invited to nominate to participate in follow-up interviews and workshops. We held seven semi-structured interviews and two participatory workshops in WA's capital city Perth ($n = 20$) and in Bunbury (southwest regional center) ($n = 8$). Four women and three men participated in interviews, and 23 women and five men participated in workshops. These qualitative methods expanded on survey responses, with semi-structured discussions guided by questions such as "What strategies could CSOs take to respond to climate change and mainstream climate justice?," and "What are opportunities for action that could be taken by CSOs and the community sector to collectively advocate for climate justice and emission reduction?." Interviewees included six CSO staff and volunteers working in fields of food, financial counseling, disability rights, family and domestic violence, and climate justice, and one university lecturer involved in sustainability. Workshop participants included 28 CSO staff and volunteers, most of whom had leadership roles in CSOs related to families, children and youth services, Indigenous support, aged care, legal services, housing and homelessness, financial support, and mental health.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were thematically analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Workshops and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and we coded data in the transcripts (Word documents) using open coding without pre-determined categories. The coded text was then thematically organized in an Excel spreadsheet. Using an inductive and flexible approach, we identified patterns in the data across the methods and thematically organized the data on a spreadsheet. For example, when analyzing survey, interview and workshop data regarding proposed opportunities for CSOs to mainstream climate justice in their work, we identified common themes such as policy, education, tools and resources, collaboration, and communication.

The research findings were written into a report and presented to the Steering Committee for interpretation and review. The FPAR process continued as the committee engaged in a dialogical process of consensus decision-making to identify and prioritize collective actions and innovations to embed climate justice and disaster resilience within the sector. As we discuss later, a key action for the Committee was the funding and development of an online *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit* for the WA community service sector.

Research findings

Thematic analysis of the data provides insights about WA CSOs' operations and practices regarding climate justice, under three broad themes: knowledge and learning, current practices, and opportunities to embed climate justice.

Knowledge and learning

The findings indicate wide disparities across the WA community service sector on levels of understanding about the relationship between climate change and social justice. In the survey, most participants self-described as having low (18%) or low-medium (42%) understanding of climate justice, with a smaller cohort self-describing as having high (10%) or medium-high (30%) understanding. This indicates that many CSOs lack sufficient knowledge and perhaps capacity and capability to work with communities to mitigate social injustices presented by climate change. Nevertheless, participants were concerned about the unforeseen social justice impacts of climate change. One survey participant decried, "Who will bear the brunt of climate change? The economic, health and social costs of climate change, and how this will further exacerbate poverty and inequality?"

Participants indicated they wanted increased knowledge, capacity and capability about social justice and climate change. They wanted to learn effective strategies about collaboration and partnership – about "ways to engage Aboriginal People in the climate justice discussion that actively promote a two-way learning" (survey participant), and also "how to get people to work together to bring about change" (survey participant). Potential areas of learning included

effective strategies to mitigate and address the impacts of climate change, ways to engage and educate community members about climate justice, and how to collaboratively work for climate justice.

Current practices

There was also wide disparity around CSOs' current practices for climate justice. Some participants indicated their organizations were involved in activities such as promoting energy justice for low-income clients, disaster risk management, and investing in solar energy, while others explained their organizations had neither the knowledge nor capacity and capability to engage in climate justice. Nearly half (45.5%) of survey participants, including those who were actively involved in climate justice, indicated their organizations did not have official/written policies or procedures relating to climate justice.

Over half of survey participants said their organizations currently engage in climate advocacy or campaigning for climate justice. This finding was unsurprising as advocacy is a key role for most CSOs. What was surprising, however, was that participants wanted to learn more about effective advocacy practice. Participants revealed that many CSOs faced barriers to engaging in climate advocacy, including lack of time, resources and funding; heavy workloads, competing demands and low organizational prioritization of climate justice; and lack of knowledge, information and expertise about climate change and climate advocacy. One survey participant identified a "danger to reduction in funding as we would [be] going against the current federal government's reluctance to discuss climate change." Another identified the challenge of an "ad hoc approach" to advocacy if they were to do it alone but were interested in collective advocacy. One survey participant stated,

Funding is a significant barrier impacting on the capacity of our sector to respond to climate change issues. [Our's is a] not-for-profit organization, and often provide services in rural and remote communities. Funding . . . is inadequate and often difficult to source. Improved commitment by commissioning bodies is needed to make certain [we] are funded to respond to the health impacts of climate change for Aboriginal People and their communities.

Participants voiced their desire to partner with Aboriginal Peoples to embed their holistic knowledges and experiences of ecosystems into climate justice practices. A participant in the Bunbury workshop said,

having/bringing the Aboriginal Elders in on land management and what works because they know the land already . . . they've been doing sustainable agriculture for long before we came along . . . there's definitely plenty we can learn from them; together though, not us and them . . .

A significant barrier to current practices was CSOs' "limited consultation with Aboriginal People and their communities" (survey participant); and where some consultations occurred participants perceived a scarcity of sincere engagement. One survey participant explained,

When Aboriginal People are consulted, often this is a "tick-box" exercise, with Aboriginal People not being a part of the discussion from the beginning, are not empowered to make decisions and do not receive feedback from agencies on consultation. Genuine partnerships with Aboriginal People and their communities is fundamental for our sector to be engaged in advocating and implementing action for climate justice . . .

Participants suggested a leadership gap existed within their CSOs, with leaders ignoring the urgency of climate change. Participants were uncertain about how to persuade leaders of the pressing need for action for climate justice. They were aware that climate justice needs to inform CSO decision making and practices, with genuine actions that are legitimized by organizational leaders, staff and community members. But they had no clear ideas how to go about taking action to change leadership thinking. One survey participant said,

Managerial workers do not think it's a priority for our organization, we aren't well educated on this topic, and we aren't sure our rights to advocating for change within the organization.

It was clear that CSOs must learn from one another to convince sector leaders of the need for change, and to assist organizations to embed climate justice behavior and thinking within their practices.

Opportunities to embed climate justice

Despite the barriers highlighted above, participants were optimistic about several potential opportunities that could help WA CSOs embed climate justice and disaster resilience in their practices. These opportunities are thematically grouped as climate justice mainstreaming, partnerships, and collective activism.

Climate justice mainstreaming

Participants identified potential for CSOs to integrate climate justice into organizational practices as a mainstreamed focal point in decision-making. As stated by one participant in the Perth workshop, this would involve,

making climate justice part of our culture – a standard filter and design principle. It is messaging that action on climate change is not optional.

Participants suggested that effective communication about why action needs to be taken is critical to mainstreaming climate justice. Participants saw communication involving “... making an economic argument rather than a moral one as the latter hasn’t seemed to work” (survey participant) where “initiatives would need to be made public, to effectively frame what is at stake, the key issues and who will be affected and how” (Bunbury workshop). Participants wanted to normalize climate justice in CSOs, with one survey participant offering communication strategies they thought may work:

Don’t use fear mongering. People tend to feel helpless and tune out. Present positive solutions ... highlight any community-led solutions that organizations and individuals can easily implement ... Make it seem like there is something people can do so they are not overwhelmed by the global nature of the issue and think it is someone else’s problem ...

Participants saw an opportunity to develop an online platform that would “be more vocal and active ... be a collective voice” (survey participant) to promote the sharing of knowledge and resources and facilitate systemic advocacy. A Perth workshop participant suggested,

... it would be great to have a sector wide toolkit that people can use to make it easier to implement and so that everybody actually is talking the same language, and that people can interpret climate justice in lots of different ways ...

This was reiterated by others who wanted tools, resources, and guidance to support CSOs to mainstream climate justice across their programs and operations.

Partnerships and collective activism

Participants highlighted opportunities that would emerge from CSOs collaborating with others for climate justice. Collective activism was seen as a conduit to amplify community voices and demands and challenge oppressive systems that cause and perpetuate climate injustices. Participants explored the formation of a coalition with identified leadership. They expressed that CSOs need to actively create partnerships by “... working together ... Form organized coalitions to build connections, networks and pool our knowledge to support each other as friends and allies ...” They wanted collective financial, vocal and physical support for existing climate justice activism, along with providing safe informal and formal spaces for conversations and action. Participants elaborated that they wanted an organized coalition with collaboration and collective initiatives, tapping into existing organizations and networks that are good at community organizing, such as churches, unions, sporting groups, schools and neighborhood networks; working across political, racial and religious divides, with national linkages. This includes stronger collaboration between community and environment sector, with bold linkages and promoting partnerships with other organizations.

Paramount is CSOs partnering with Aboriginal Peoples and organizations to decolonize approaches to climate justice. This requires authentic relationships that “respect Aboriginal People’s practices of respecting and looking after the land” (survey participant) and finding “ways to engage Aboriginal People in the climate justice discussion that actively promote a two-way learning” (survey participant). A survey participant further explained,

Aboriginal People have generations of traditional knowledge and expertise in managing and living on the land and must be a part of the climate justice conversation from the beginning. They must be empowered to make decisions, and receive feedback from their consultations . . .

Participants suggested that genuine partnerships between CSOs and Aboriginal communities for climate justice could have broader benefits for collective health, wellbeing, and socio-economic development. A survey participant stated,

Aboriginal People and their communities are significantly vulnerable to environmental health factors and are often faced with challenges due to inadequate housing, maintenance, clean water, sewerage facilities and overcrowding. Greater support to develop infrastructure, waste management and sustainability is important in facing the health impacts of climate change, such as through Environmental Health Workers who are experts in managing these risks facing Aboriginal communities.

Collective priority-setting and action

Following participatory data collection and analysis, the Steering Committee continued the FPAR process by engaging in collective data interpretation and decision-making to identify key priorities for collective action regarding climate justice and the WA community service sector. The Steering Committee engaged in a facilitated dialogue to reflect on the research findings and prioritize opportunities for action. Through consensus decision-making, the Committee decided that the next stage of the project would involve the development, testing and application of a *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit* (2025). The Toolkit is an innovation that aims to support WA CSOs to infuse climate justice and disaster resilience across all areas of their operations and programs. This innovation would strengthen CSO knowledge, capacity and capability to support communities to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Drawing on the research findings, the Committee proposed the Toolkit include several elements, including collectively-agreed language and definitions; an accessible and practical framework of climate justice; resources regarding the social justice impacts of climate change in WA; information about practical actions for embedding climate justice and disaster resilience into CSOs, such as governance and policies, organizational structures and activities, service models (including their co-design), finance and procurement, divestment, staffing, buildings and media and communications; guidance for developing organizational policies and procedures; strategies for engaging in collective climate justice advocacy; and, case studies of CSOs integrating climate justice and disaster resilience into operations and practice.

Funding was attained in late-2022 and 2023 for a multi-year project to continue the FPAR process to develop and implement the Toolkit. A new project governance structure was established with an Aboriginal Steering Group comprising Aboriginal Traditional Owners across WA providing cultural governance, and a Lived Experience Advisory Group of People with Lived Experience of social injustices. The Steering Committee transitioned into the project’s new Stakeholder Committee, with representatives of both governance groups, along with leaders from WA CSOs and a group of interdisciplinary academic researchers from ECU (including students). The project is developing and refining an online *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit*, as demonstrated in [Figures 2 and 3](#). The research findings were used as a foundation for extensive discussions with the governance groups, Stakeholder Committee, academic team and other technical experts to influence and develop the Toolkit structure and content. A key learning was the need to focus on transformative *processes* to effectively infuse climate justice and disaster resilience in CSO policies, operations and programs.



Figure 2. Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit guides for equitable processes.

RESOURCE LIBRARY

GOVERNANCE, POLICIES & FINANCE	PROGRAM AND PRACTICE	ADVOCACY, CAMPAIGNS, COMMUNICATIONS & RESEARCH	REDUCING ORGANISATIONAL FOOTPRINT	DISASTER RESILIENCE
CLIMATE JUSTICE POLICY	CO-DESIGNING SERVICES PROGRAMS + ACTIVITIES	CLIMATE JUSTICE ADVOCACY + CAMPAIGNS	ASSESSING ORGANISATIONAL FOOTPRINT	DISASTER READINESS
PURCHASING, PROCUREMENT + CONSUMPTION	INTEGRATING CLIMATE JUSTICE INTO EXISTING PROGRAMS + ACTIVITIES	INTEGRATING CLIMATE JUSTICE INTO EXISTING ADVOCACY + CAMPAIGNS	ENERGY	CLIMATE RISK + IMPACT ASSESSMENT
INVESTMENT + DIVESTMENT	FINANCIAL COUNSELLING + DISASTER	CLIMATE JUSTICE COMMUNICATION + FRAMING	WATER	COMMUNITY-LED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
FUNDING + BUDGETING	LEGAL NEEDS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND DISASTER	MEDIA RELEASE + STATEMENTS	FOOD SOVEREIGNTY	THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS
FUNDRAISING + SPONSORSHIP	HEALTH	CLIMATE CONSCIOUS MEDIA	TRAVEL + VEHICLES	RECOVERY (FRAMING)
STAFF + VOLUNTEERS	CLIMATE EMOTIONS, CLIMATE ANXIETY, ECO-ORIENT, SOLASTALGIA	FALSE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS + "UNDERMINING" TACTICS	WASTE	DISASTER RESILIENCE ADVOCACY
INSURANCE + CLIMATE RISK	MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE JUSTICE IN PROGRAMS + ACTIVITIES	REAL CLIMATE JUSTICE SOLUTIONS	SUSTAINABLE + CLIMATE RESILIENT BUILDINGS	CLIMATE IMPACTS ON SOCIAL INJUSTICES
COLLABORATING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS		MONITORING, EVALUATION + RESEARCH		UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT CLIMATE EXTREMES

Climate Justice & Resilience Toolkit

Figure 3. Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit resource library.

The *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit (2025)* includes five components, divided into Guides for Equitable Processes (four sections), and a Resource Library. Section 1, *Building Relationships*, accentuates meaningful engagement with communities, centering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and People with Lived Experience expertise while also exploring diverse concepts of time. Section 2, *Collective Learning*, fosters a shared understanding of climate justice, intersectionality, and climate impacts on social injustices. Section 3, *Collectively Assessing*, provides tools for identifying climate injustices in communities, exploring organizational reflection and positioning, and assessing climate risks. Section 4, *Collective Integration*, supports organizations in developing and embedding climate justice principles through workshops and dialogue. Additionally, a *Resource Library* offers practical materials to deepen knowledges and support CSOs to enact climate justice and disaster

resilience through community service governance, policies, programs, campaigns and advocacy. This Toolkit structure emphasizes CSOs redressing colonial and capitalist practices through transforming organizational processes, and then promotes opportunities for practical change.

The next cycle of research and action with individual CSOs aims to support implementation of tools and processes to enhance climate justice and disaster resilience in their organizations and communities. The project will continue to use an FPAR methodology, which enables ongoing cycles of identifying needs, implementing actions at multiple levels, and collective reflection to enhance sector learning.

Discussion

Despite the pivotal role of CSOs in resilience building and supporting communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change, there is limited understanding about CSO knowledges, capacities, and capabilities in climate justice. Through FPAR, this study explored WA CSOs' current knowledge and practices about climate change and social justice, and opportunities and actions to strengthen organizational structures and practices to facilitate climate justice in the WA community service sector. We found that WA CSOs have significant gaps in knowledge, capacity and capability regarding mitigating climate-induced social injustices and ways to embed a climate justice and disaster resilience lens in their policies and operations. Through the FPAR process, these findings led to the funding and development of a *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit* with guides, tools and resources to support transformative processes within CSOs (and the sector) toward climate justice and disaster resilience.

The research and resulting Toolkit have several implications for innovation in community services and social work in the context of climate justice and disaster resilience, including building literacy, enhancing community engagement, providing information, tools and resources, transforming CSO structures, policies and practices, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation. We discuss these implications through the framework of climate justice dimensions.

Building CSO literacy in climate justice and decolonization

The findings demonstrate the importance of building literacy in climate justice and decolonization within CSOs, which are currently lacking. Building literacy is an opportunity to embolden recognitional climate justice, which acknowledges the structural causes and inequitable impacts of climate change, as well as diverse lived experiences, knowledges, values and cultures from which climate change and transformative responses are understood and enacted (Juhola et al., 2022). Recognitional justice can be supported through educational reform for social workers to engage with climate justice prior to entering the workforce (K. Bell, 2019). Reframing human-centric health and wellbeing paradigms as holistic and interconnected with planetary health and collective survival may also contribute to anticolonial practice (F. M. Bell et al., 2019).

The results indicate that CSO staff require enhanced understanding of the nexus between climate change, social justice, and (de)colonization, raising questions about the degree to which CSOs are currently prepared and equipped to address climate injustices from a decolonial or anticolonial lens. This highlights several innovative opportunities for CSOs. Recognitional justice highlights the need to acknowledge how colonialism, compounded by neoliberalism, perpetuates harm to First Nations Peoples and Country, which in turn harms everyone. Furthermore, it demands respect for Aboriginal Peoples' sovereign governance systems and ways of being that have cared for Country for thousands of years. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples understand "Country" as land, sea, sky and an extension of the self (Taylor-Bragge et al., 2021). For example, on Noongar Boodjar (south-west WA), the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal Peoples is intrinsically connected to the trilogy of Katitjin, Boodjar and Moort (Knowledge, Country, and Family) (Harben et al., 2004). Aboriginal knowledge systems emphasize relationality with Country, passed down through generations via oral

traditions and lived experience. This holistic approach recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and prioritizes environmental stewardship for future generations, contrasting with Western views that separate humans from nature. For CSOs to effectively address climate justice, they must meaningfully engage with and learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing, moving beyond tokenistic recognition to genuine partnerships that center Aboriginal leadership and knowledge systems. This requires CSOs to fundamentally transform their approaches, creating space for Aboriginal worldviews to guide climate action while supporting Aboriginal self-determination in decision-making and governance.

Upon recognizing the harms of colonization and strengths of First Nations Peoples, CSOs, particularly those that contributed to the colonial project in Australia and internationally, have a responsibility to enact corrective climate justice. Corrective justice addresses historical wrongs through apologies, reparations, and financial compensation (Parsons et al., 2024). It points to CSOs decolonizing their structures and practices, making amends, and restoring trust with First Nations Peoples who are continually harmed and disadvantaged by (neo)colonial systems, while acknowledging the deep cultural connections to Country and the vital role of knowledge holders in addressing climate change.

Enhancing community engagement and participation

The study highlights the need and opportunity for CSOs to enhance community engagement and participation to develop effective climate justice responses, which reflects the procedural climate justice dimension (Juhola et al., 2022). When CSOs collaborate with People with Lived Experience of climate injustices and center their voices in decision making (Dunn et al., 2022) or as “lead users” for social innovation (Morjaria et al., 2013, p. 1), they enact procedural justice. Participatory and grassroots engagement positively contribute to building social innovation capabilities (Fait et al., 2023). Genuine community engagement through respectful, accessible and jargon-free conversations leads to more effective, community-led, and place-based initiatives (CJP & City of Melbourne, 2023). Strong community engagement also presents an opportunity for distributive climate justice, which is concerned with minimizing negative impacts of climate change and maladaptive policies on the most impacted marginalized communities (Juhola et al., 2022). CSO advocacy and services are more likely to tangibly improve their material conditions of impacted communities when those communities are involved in their design and evaluation – a lead user design approach (Morjaria et al., 2013).

Providing information, tools and resources

The findings highlight the importance of practical information, tools, and resources for CSOs to effectively engage with climate justice and disaster resilience. Currently, existing climate justice toolkits focus on advocacy without tangible suggestions for CSO operations and practice (Kennedy, 2023; WECF, 2022), while CSO-specific toolkits focus on risk without considering structural factors (ACOSS, 2015). Moreover, the findings indicate the importance of a central, accessible repository to share information to increase sector knowledge and guide action. The *Climate Justice and Disaster Resilience Toolkit* initiated through this FPAR project offers both discrete replicable tools and more adaptable process-based ones applicable across an organization. The Toolkit emphasizes that climate justice and disaster resilience is core business for CSOs; it cannot be relegated to a single department or staff member to carry out as a niche environmental project. Further, the Toolkit encourages co-learning across the sector, supported by an FPAR approach to co-produce new knowledge and practice for social and structural change. Partnerships between organizations and sectors can promote shared learning and reduce the burden of knowledge gathering for CSOs with limited time and resources, which are barriers to action (Porter et al., 2020).

Transforming CSO structures, policies and practices

The findings underscore that CSO structures, policies, and practices are potential sites for social innovation toward climate justice and disaster resilience. Many WA CSOs discussed governance and operational areas for change, noting the need for greater collaboration and capacity building across all areas of the organization. Yet, nearly half of participating CSOs did not have policies and procedures relating to social justice and climate change. However, the Toolkit cautions against relying on reformist and bureaucratic approaches to CSO change, emphasizing the need for substantial individual and organizational self-reflection and structural change. The findings and Toolkit emphasize the need for transformative climate justice, a dimension that calls for rebuilding systems and structures that are democratic, inclusive of marginalized groups, and brave enough to tackle the root causes of climate injustices (Newell et al., 2021).

In particular, CSOs are reckoning with neoliberal and colonial systems which influence the community and health care sectors' philosophy and governance, especially in the wake of disaster (Ranasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2021; Roussy & Livingstone, 2018; van Heugten, 2018). Rather than taking the place-based, collaborative, and horizontal approach that climate justice requires, neoliberalism fosters a siloed, top-down approach to care that is not responsive to community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and place-based needs of climate-just adaptation (FEA, 2022). As such, a community service sector-wide transformation for climate justice requires a paradigm shift toward collective and relational understandings of health and wellbeing (K. Bell, 2019; Boetto, 2019), which would respect sovereign First Nations governance systems that uphold collective rights and responsibilities for people and place (Poelina, 2020).

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation for climate justice

Finally, the FPAR process highlights the importance of strengthening monitoring and evaluation for continuous learning and improvement in CSOs. This may involve adapting existing tools and practices or innovating new ways of working. For example, the *Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit* (ACOSS, 2015) allows CSOs to estimate baseline organizational resilience and re-measure after implementing risk mitigation strategies. Comparatively, FEA (2022) imagines a pathway for just adaptation that challenges the status-quo, including hierarchies of privilege, engrained individualism and exclusionary leadership. Such transformation can be difficult to quantify through traditional quantitative and reductive measures, and calls for qualitative approaches (e.g. narrative analysis and storytelling) that are innovative and flexible in a new age of climate uncertainty. Nuanced measures of social change present another opportunity for distributive climate justice as they provide communities with the information they need to work alongside CSOs to fill service gaps and understand organizational barriers to change.

The Toolkit initiated through this research aims to strengthen monitoring and evaluation through the FPAR process. FPAR and climate justice share principles around participation and transformative social and structural change and together support community-based organizations to co-produce new knowledge and action (Godden et al., 2020). Through FPAR, the Toolkit can be more accountable to diverse visions and material needs of communities living with climate injustices now and into the future, including its own Lived Experience Advisory Group.

Limitations

Despite using numerous data collection methods including surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participatory workshops, this study involved a relatively small number of participants, which may limit generalizability of findings. However, the FPAR methodology has an exploratory and place-based focus, prioritizing depth of analysis over breadth (Godden et al., 2020). This first stage of data collection provided sufficient evidence for the WA community service sector to

develop priority actions in this emerging space. Another issue not yet addressed is whether implementing the Toolkit through organizational structures, policies and practice can produce tangible changes (distributive justice) quickly enough for the communities bearing the brunt of climate injustices. As the Toolkit is implemented with CSOs, this offers an interesting avenue for future research. We also acknowledge that there is currently very little academic literature related to CSOs and climate justice. As such, this article largely refers to international literature regarding conceptualizations of climate justice, and gray literature related to CSOs and climate justice, particularly as it relates to the Australian context. This limitation may impact the generalizability of this FPAR project.

Conclusion

CSOs are potential social agents for supporting climate justice and disaster resilience. CSOs directly engage with communities who are disproportionately impacted by the intersections of climate change and inequality. Their contextual insights can generate services and advocacy that transform unjust systems while taking care of people and Country in a disaster prone and changing climate. By examining CSO engagement with climate justice and disaster resilience in WA through the key dimensions of climate justice this study makes a novel contribution to scholarship and highlights practical opportunities for social innovations within CSOs. The identified opportunities emphasize collaboration between different sectors and communities, recognizing a whole of society approach is needed to respond to climate change in ways that center the experiences, voices, and needs of structurally disadvantaged communities (recognitional and procedural justice). This calls for changes to organizational structures, policies and practices that ensure positive material impacts for communities (distributive and transformative justice). In WA and other colonized contexts, the community service sector can significantly enhance climate justice by making amends and engaging with First Nations Peoples' governance, knowledges, and relational and reciprocal ways of being which foster respect and care for Country and all people (corrective and recognitional justice).

This study contributes to social innovation theory and practice for human services in three ways. First, the study initiated the development of a much-needed *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit (2025)* to enhance the WA community service sector which is currently unprepared for climate impacts. This Toolkit will guide CSOs through transformative processes of embedding principles and practices of climate justice and disaster resilience across their governance, operations, programs, and advocacy. Second, the FPAR methodology underpinning this study and the resultant Toolkit reinforces participatory decision-making to facilitate equitable social change (Kim, 2023). FPAR fosters active community engagement, place-based praxis, and co-designed initiatives to embed climate justice in CSOs. Both the Toolkit and the FPAR process demonstrate procedural justice dimensions which are vital for climate justice and positive social change created with communities, echoing Morjaria et al.'s (2013) vision of lead user participatory design. As such, we identify a third contribution of this work: that CSOs are fertile sites of social innovation as communities collectively grapple with ethical and organizational responses to climate injustices. CSOs and the communities they serve are on the frontlines of climate change, and, as expounded in the *Climate Justice and Resilience Toolkit (2025)*, many opportunities arise for collectivist, community-led research and action within CSOs to facilitate structural change toward climate justice. While this study has been place-based and specific to WA CSOs and climate injustices, practitioners, organizations, and researchers in social work field stand to benefit from the transferable theories, practices, and processes that informed and resulted from this study. Future applied research in other regions may examine and apply climate justice with CSOs and communities by identifying the needs and desires of their own lead users, undertake collective action to transform CSO policies and operations, and support community-led action for climate justice.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the members of the project's Stakeholder Committee, Aboriginal Steering Group and Lived Experience Advisory Group who govern and inform the development of this project.

This project acknowledges the funding contribution of Lotterywest and the Commonwealth Government and support of the Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services.















Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award; Lotterywest; Commonwealth Government of Australia.

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