



**Western Cape
Government**
Environmental Affairs and
Development Planning

BETTER TOGETHER.

WESTERN CAPE STATE OF ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK REPORT 2018

Key Synthesis

**This summary should be read with the full and
unabridged SoEOR 2018**

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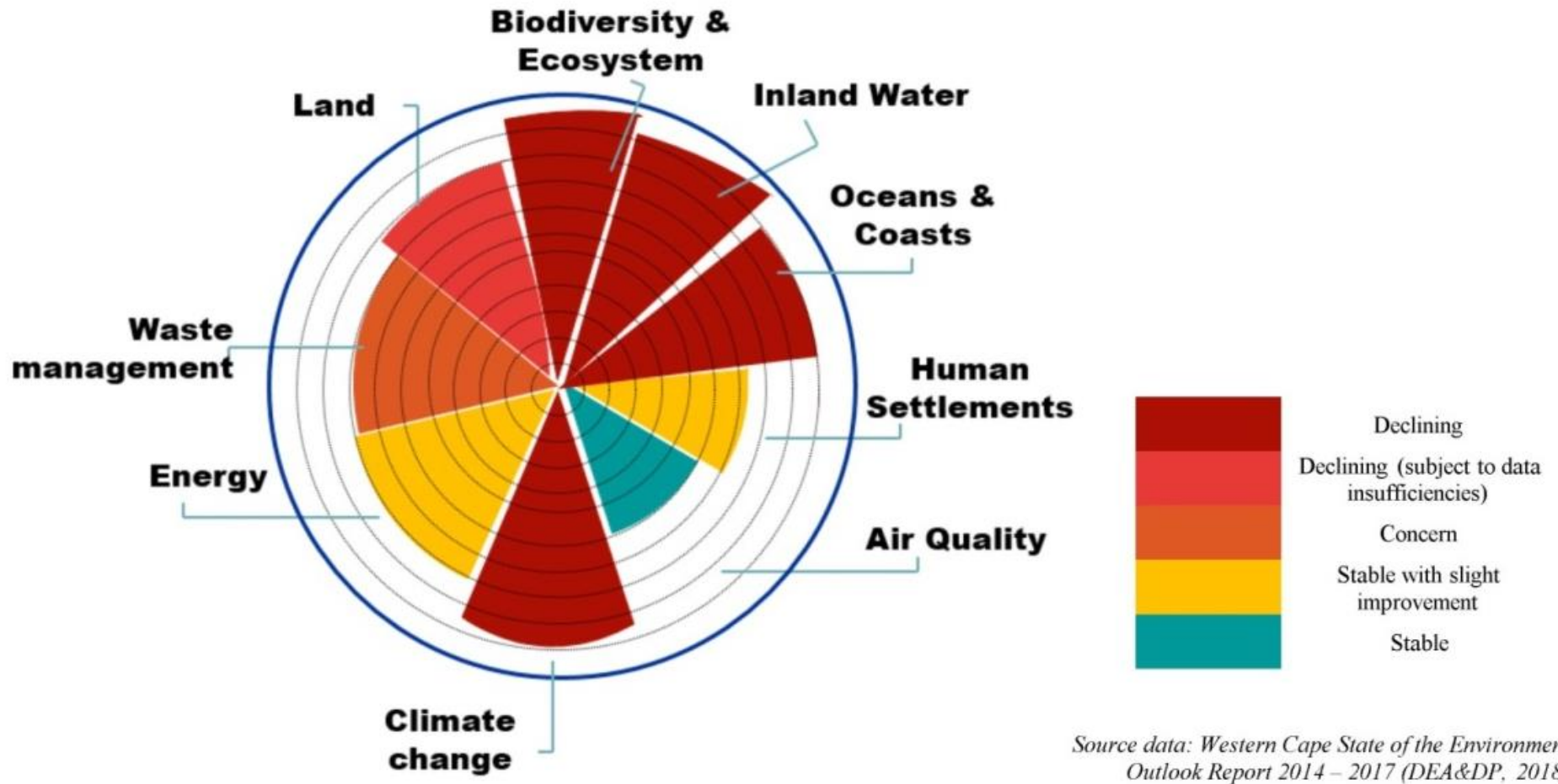
KEY MESSAGES

The Western Cape State of Environment Outlook reporting period 2014 – 2017 (SoEOR 2018) coincided with a drought that was the region's worst in recorded history. The province faces experiences the most natural disasters — the frequency and intensity of fires, floods and droughts has increased significantly over the past two decades. The province is also home to 75% of the country's threatened plant species. Persistent pressures from changing conditions are not only putting the province's unique biomes, but also communities and economy under strain. Reporting on the Western Cape's 'state of the environment' in this critical period could not have highlighted the urgency of our declining environmental trends in a more pronounced way – not only how it affects everyone in society, but also our collective roles in stabilising and improving declining environmental trends. With such a sudden loss of natural resources, the interdependencies between society, economy and environment become clear. The estimated economic impact of the recent and on-going drought is R50 billion (currently estimated), impacting all of the Western Cape society and with specific vulnerabilities to the poor and individuals employed in the agricultural sector. Natural disasters are adding significant stress to the province's economy, which is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change given its high reliance on natural resources. In the midst of disaster, risk management responses are usually met with urgency. However, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are our reminder to act now – ahead of "slow onset disasters" that will equally affect people and planet. This is underscored by the current state and trends of the environmental and social themes reported on in the Western Cape State of the Environment Outlook report for the period 2014 – 2017.

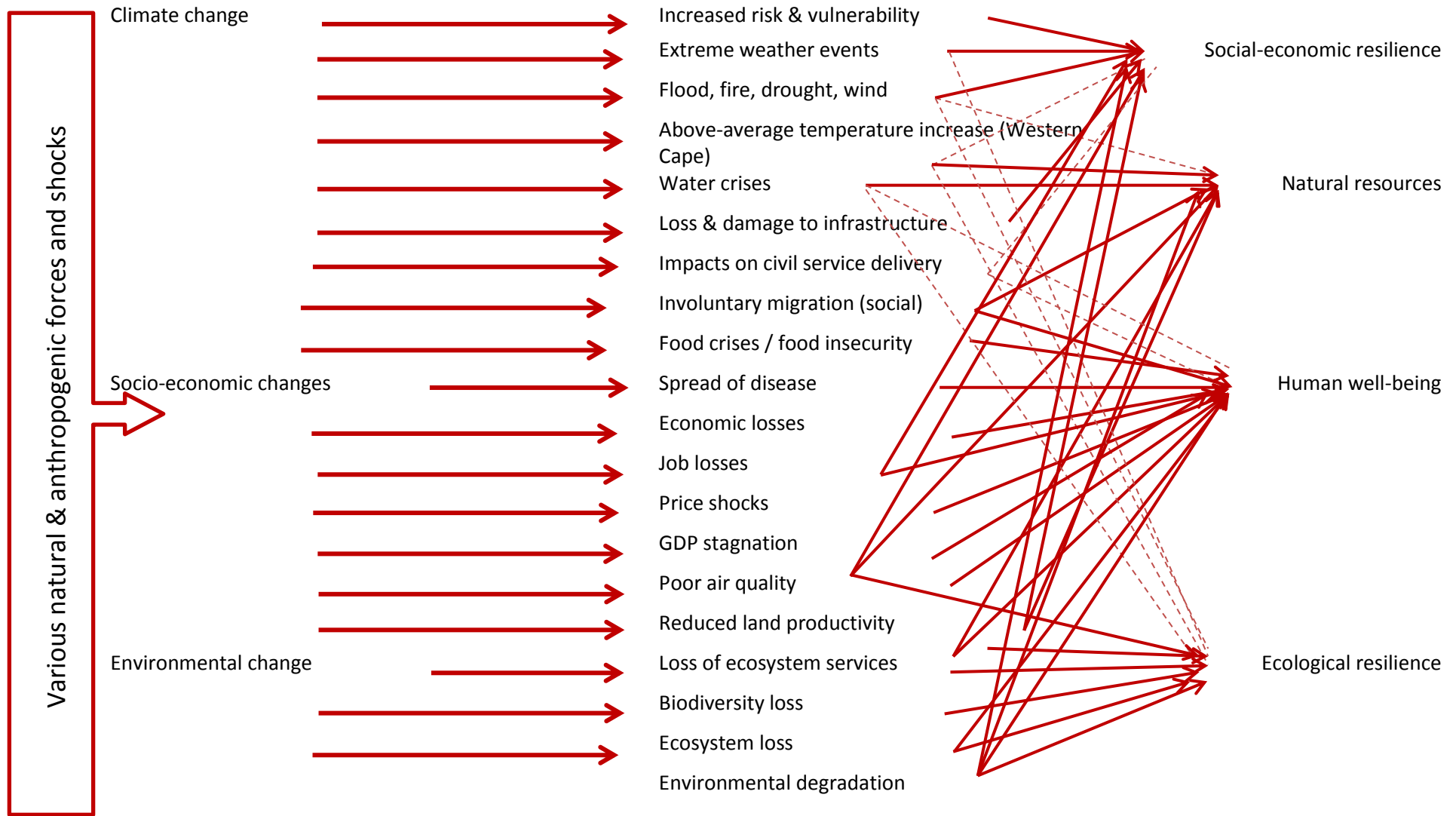
The overall declining outlook of the Western Cape's natural resources equates to unsustainable pressure on the province's natural systems. The SoEOR 2018 reports on the identified drivers that are fuelling these declining trends. These are categorised according to four large-scale groups namely socio-economic, biological, anthropogenic or governance drivers.

WESTERN CAPE STATE OF ENVIRONMENT: WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

The following diagram summarises the outcome of the report: the socio-economic themes of the province are stable to improving, whilst the biophysical themes are declining:



SEVERAL STATES OF CHANGE, INTER-RELATED RISKS & VULNERABILITIES



WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS BEHIND THESE TRENDS?

Socio-economic

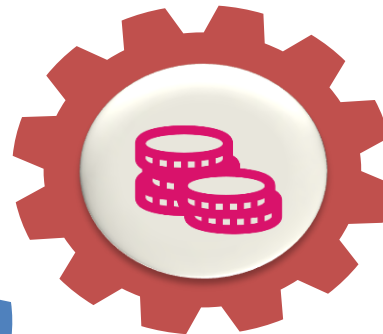
The Western Cape population is estimated at 6.5 million (StatsSA, 2017). The population is increasing and expected to exceed 90% of being urbanised by 2030. Current key drivers thus include: urbanisation, human settlements, population dynamics, growth and migration, economic growth, consumerism, socio-economic inequality, service delivery backlogs, spatial development, and transportation.



Governance

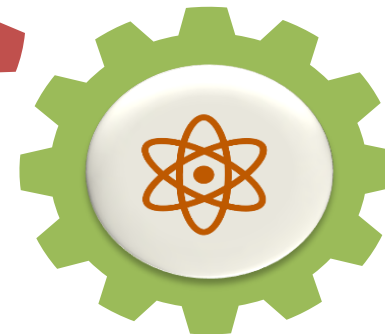
Governance is the practice of how authoritative structures guide strategic direction and regulate society. How governance is applied at different levels of government to manage these drivers and pressures of change. Environmental governance is key to the state of the environment as it guides environmental management of ecological assets and natural resources and it does so on behalf of society.

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Anthropogenic

The increasing population of the Western Cape exerts pressures on the natural environment through over-exploitation of resources (*water, agricultural products, living space, ecological services*) through activities land use, agriculture, coastal activities (*industry and settlements*), pollution, industry, energy, and limited mining, oil and gas.

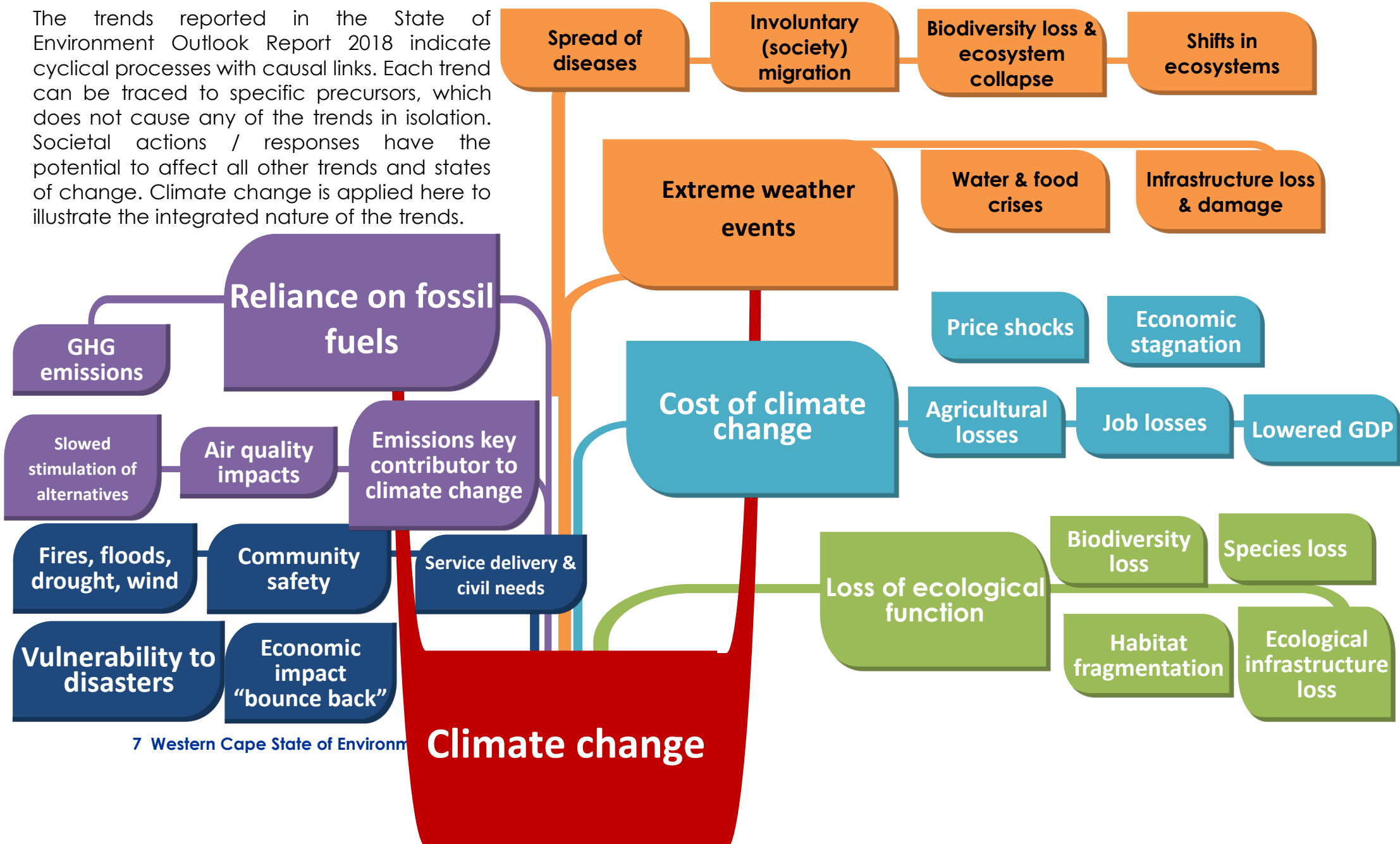


Biological

Large-scale biological drivers are natural (biological) processes that are vastly exacerbated by human activities. These include climate change, drought, invasive species, fires and altered fire regimes. The Western Cape is particularly vulnerable to climate change with economic, social and ecological

INTEGRATED NATURE OF TRENDS: CLIMATE CHANGE AS AN EXAMPLE

The trends reported in the State of Environment Outlook Report 2018 indicate cyclical processes with causal links. Each trend can be traced to specific precursors, which does not cause any of the trends in isolation. Societal actions / responses have the potential to affect all other trends and states of change. Climate change is applied here to illustrate the integrated nature of the trends.



WESTER CAPE: FUTURE OUTLOOK

This Western Cape SoEOR 2018 ties into the National State of Environment reporting structure under the requirements of South Africa's National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998. At a provincial level, the SoEOR 2018 indicates on specific urgencies that have to be addressed to secure a sustainable and resilient future outlook. The province's declining water security, increased frequency of fires, floods and droughts, coastal storm surges and above average increases in temperature (particularly in the inland and urban areas) is indicative of the current Western Cape risk profile. The economy is negatively affected and settlements are subjected to vulnerabilities because of these negative environmental and climate change trends, with effects on service delivery down to community health and safety. In designed mitigation and adaptation responses, the integrated nature must be kept in focus.

The report shows how socio-economic drivers – including our current individual lifestyles, population dynamics and established socio-economic systems such as our transport system – will keep these negative and declining trends in motion. Although natural resources, geography, climate and socio-economic factors influence the current specific Western Cape outlook, the province is not unique in the sense that it aligns with five of the top ten global risks by likelihood – Extreme weather events, Major natural disasters, Man-made environmental damage and disasters, Major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse (both terrestrial and marine) and Water crises, as reported on by World Economic Forum in 2019:

1	Extreme weather events (e.g. floods, storms, etc.)	
	Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation	2
3	Major natural disasters (e.g. earthquake, tsunami, volcanic eruption, geomagnetic storms)	
	Massive incident of data fraud/theft	4
5	Large-scale cyberattacks	
	Man-made environmental damage and disasters (e.g. oil spills, radioactive contamination, etc.)	6
7	Large-scale involuntary migration	
	Major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse (terrestrial or marine)	8
9	Water crises	
	Asset bubbles in a major economy	10

Top
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Risks by
Likelihood
Global Risks Report

These require urgent actions across the entire province – from civil society, private and public sector – to ensure our readiness for the future outlook. The Western Cape Government recognises that not responding timeously and effectively to these declining trends in the environmental state can lead to critical vulnerabilities, that are not limited to the natural resource base but directly related to community resilience, climate resilience, social well-being, social equality and economic stability. How the Western Cape Government is responding to these risks and vulnerabilities have been detailed in the SoEOR 2018 and best captured by the overarching National Development Plan (NDP, 2012) which asserts that South Africa must find ways to utilise its environmental resources to support an economy that enables it to remain competitive, while also meeting the needs of society; and at provincial level the OneCape 2040 long-term vision - stimulating the transition towards an inclusive and resilient future for the Western Cape.

(WEF The Global Risks Report, 2019)

References

Department of Environmental Affairs & Development Planning. Western Cape State of Environment Outlook Report 2018.

StatsSA (2017). Mid-year population estimates

World Economic Forum (WEF) The Global Risks Report (2019).