



20 March 2019

Ms Leanne Linard MP
Chair
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000
Email: eesbc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Linard,

Thank you for inviting QIMR Berghofer to make a submission on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019. Please find the Institute's submission below.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the submission with the Committee and to provide further information to assist the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Professor David Whiteman AM
Deputy Director



SUBMISSION TO THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute supports the Queensland Government's plan to establish Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQ) as a statutory agency dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, reducing the risk factors associated with chronic disease, and reducing health inequities. Given the complex range of factors contributing to rising rates of chronic diseases, the Institute also supports the Government's commitment to a multi-strategy, multi-sector approach, as well as the focus on addressing the social determinants of health.

In this submission QIMR Berghofer makes a number of recommendations relating to the strategies used to identify gaps in the evidence, the availability of local partners, the processes for funding research, the composition of the board, and the funding model for the agency to achieve its objectives.

INTRODUCTION

QIMR Berghofer welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019.

QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute came into being in 1945 as the Queensland Government's statutory medical research institute. Initially established to research infectious diseases – particularly tropical diseases – that were causing much suffering to Queenslanders and holding back the state's development, QIMR Berghofer has expanded and changed its research priorities in response to Queensland's changing needs.

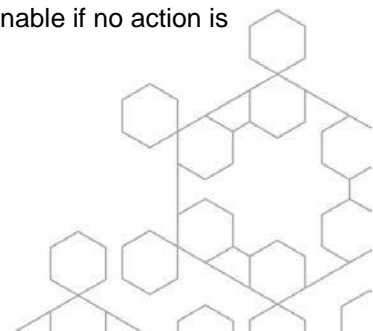
Today, the Institute is one of Australia's oldest, largest and most successful medical research institutes, with more than 900 scientists, students and support staff, and 65 state-of-the-art laboratories. QIMR Berghofer is an acknowledged world leader in cancer, mental health, chronic disorders and infectious diseases. In addition to our internationally recognised work in drug development, immunology, mental health and infectious diseases, the Institute also conducts world-class research in the following areas of relevance to Health and Wellbeing Queensland:

- Describing the epidemiology of chronic diseases, including cancers (eg. incidence, trends and geographic distributions of disease)
- Investigating the causes of chronic diseases, including cancers
- Investigating the role of diet and nutrition in health and disease, including in early life
- Understanding how genes and environment contribute to health and disease
- Documenting the impacts of socio-economic influences on disease (eg. factors associated with obesity in boys and girls of different ages)
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to explore health issues
- Conducting large-scale population-based effectiveness trials.

Given this highly relevant expertise, the Institute is ready and willing to work in partnership with HWQ to help improve health and to reduce rates of chronic disease across the state.

OBJECTIVES

QIMR Berghofer commends and supports Health and Wellbeing Queensland's objectives, as stated in the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019 (see Part 2, Division 2, 10: Objective). Rates of chronic disease continue to rise in Queensland and their burden on the health system will become unsustainable if no action is



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taken. There are many complex factors contributing to these rising rates of chronic disease. For this reason, QIMR Berghofer supports the Bill's "multi-strategy multi-sector" approach that aims to address the social determinants of health.

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS**Research**

The stated functions of HWQ include developing partnerships and collaborating with academia, giving grants for activities to further its objective or carry out its functions, and coordinating the exchange of information about activities to prevent illness or promote health and wellbeing (see Part 2, Division 2, 11: Functions). QIMR Berghofer supports these functions, and particularly, the emphasis on an evidence-based approach.

It is important that HWQ, as a priority, identify gaps in the evidence, and commission research to fill those gaps. This will avoid duplicating existing research efforts and wasting scarce research funding. The risk factors for many chronic diseases are known; however, the most effective means of changing the population's exposure to these risk factors is unclear. Research is needed to ensure that only effective initiatives are pursued. This branch of research – known as implementation science – requires a range of specialised skills in behavioural sciences, epidemiology, biostatistics and health economics. QIMR Berghofer has internationally recognised expertise in all of these disciplines, and especially in measuring and interpreting population distributions of risk factors for chronic diseases.

The Institute notes that the Bill and explanatory notes do not include any specific provisions or references about collaborations between HWQ and Queensland-based researchers. As outlined above, QIMR Berghofer has already established a large body of relevant research and has the expertise to conduct further research in partnership with HWQ. Given that world-class and highly relevant expertise is available in Queensland, the Institute encourages HWQ to prioritise local research collaborations.

QIMR Berghofer encourages HWQ to implement an open, transparent, efficient and competitive grant process, with measures in place to avoid conflicts of interest. The Institute also encourages HWQ to assess grant applications based on the research's significance, feasibility, value for money and outputs.

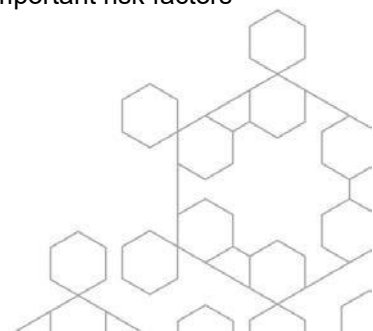
Monitoring and evaluation

QIMR Berghofer notes that one of HWQ's functions is to "monitor and evaluate activities to prevent illness and promote health and wellbeing" (see Part 2, Division 2, 11: Functions). QIMR Berghofer supports this focus on monitoring and evaluating HWQ's activities and their impacts, which will be crucial to HWQ's success. This includes research funded by HWQ grants.

QIMR Berghofer recommends that the board put in place an overarching monitoring and evaluation framework. All health promotion and prevention activities should be underpinned by the regular (ideally annual) collection of key baseline and follow-up data to evaluate whether HWQ's objectives are being achieved. It is important that funding for effective monitoring and evaluation be factored into the projects and interventions undertaken and funded by HWQ in order to monitor its impact.

Other functions

QIMR Berghofer recommends that HWQ mandate the monitoring and evaluation of health status in Queensland using scientifically validated indices of 'wellness' and 'illness'. Data on many important risk factors



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for chronic diseases (eg. time spent outdoors, intake of common medications) are not monitored systematically, making it impossible to track changes over time. This lack of data makes it impossible to monitor or evaluate the impact of any initiatives or interventions such as legislation, taxation and education. If these data are collected, QIMR Berghofer has the expertise to monitor and evaluate the impact of these health initiatives.

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

QIMR Berghofer notes that the board is to be composed of up to four members who are CEOs of government departments, as well as between one and six members who have “qualifications or experience in at least one of the following areas: Law; business or financial management; public health; academia; community service organisations; the not-for-profit sector; or another area the Minister considers relevant or necessary...” (see Part 3, Division 2, 18: Board members).

QIMR Berghofer supports the proposal that the board include the CEOs of relevant government departments. Their inclusion will help ensure the agency maintains a broad focus on all of the factors contributing to chronic disease, and will help the agency to build necessary partnerships. QIMR Berghofer contends that the board *must* also include at least one member with experience in research/academia and public health respectively. The board should also have consumer representation.

FUNDING

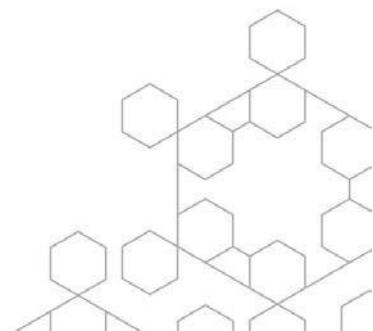
As outlined above, QIMR Berghofer wholly supports the establishment of HWQ to promote good health, wellbeing and disease prevention. The Institute recommends that consideration be given to directing a fixed percentage of the annual health budget to these activities. The Institute recommends that HWQ have a reliable income stream from the Government to ensure it is able to meet its core functions.

In relation to the allocation of HWQ’s proposed budget (see page 7, Explanatory Notes to the Health and Wellbeing Bill 2019), QIMR Berghofer suggests that HWQ develop a strategic plan outlining its funding objectives, including research, implementation, advertising and administration.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FOUNDATION

QIMR Berghofer notes that the amendments to the Hospital Foundations Act (see Part 7, Division 2) provide for the establishment of a foundation to support Health and Wellbeing Queensland. It is proposed that the HWQ CEO be responsible for investigating whether a foundation would be viable and a good source of attracting new revenue.

As outlined above, QIMR Berghofer recommends that Health and Wellbeing Queensland be fully funded by government to ensure that its whole revenue stream is guaranteed. In the Institute’s view, it is important that HWQ be recognised as a government agency and be resourced as necessary to meet the Government’s objectives. Charitable revenue is unpredictable and securing such revenue requires substantial investment, which risks consuming much of the energy and resources of a new agency. It is QIMR Berghofer’s position that HWQ’s functions and goals are too important to rest on the uncertainty of philanthropic support. Philanthropic support tends to favour research and activities that are popular, ‘trendy’ or easy to understand, whereas Government funding can be directed to important, strategic priorities, regardless of popular support.



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The Bill states that HWQ must detail its performance in an annual report (see Part 5, 43: Annual report to include particular matters). QIMR Berghofer agrees it very important to monitor the agency's activities through agreed process measures. Recognising the long latent periods of chronic diseases, and, consequently, the long intervals between reducing exposure to a risk factor and the subsequent decline in disease incidence, it is important that HWQ be given a fair and adequate timeframe to achieve its goals. Many complex factors contribute to chronic disease, and it will take time for HWQ to achieve measurable change.

CONCLUSION

QIMR Berghofer commends the Queensland Government's commitment to establishing HWQ. In particular, the Institute supports the focus on disease prevention and evidence-based initiatives. In summary, QIMR Berghofer makes the following key recommendations:

- That HWQ identify gaps in the evidence and commission research to fill those gaps, which will help to ensure that only effective initiatives are implemented
- That HWQ prioritise collaborations with local research institutions
- That HWQ implement an open, transparent, efficient and competitive grant process
- That the HWQ board include at least one member with experience in research/academia and public health respectively, as well as a consumer
- That HWQ be fully funded by the Government.

QIMR Berghofer appreciates the opportunity to make this submission. The Institute would welcome the opportunity to discuss the submission with the Committee and to provide further information to assist the Committee's inquiry.

