

18 March 2019

Committee Secretary  
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Health and Wellbeing Queensland Bill 2019.

This submission is made on behalf of the Queensland Primary Health Network (QPHN). There are thirty one PHNs established across Australia, seven of which cover the state of Queensland. The PHNs are funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health with the aim of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time. The focus of the QPHNs is on primary care, particularly through the support of General Practitioners, and on working with a range of government and community organisations, service providers and the community to develop and better integrate primary health services.

The proposed establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQ) is strongly supported by the QPHN. We anticipate that Queensland's experience will be similar to other Australian states where separate agencies also exist and have been effective in delivering results that have a positive impact on health prevention and promotion.

The role of the PHNs is clearly mandated through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the State and Territory bilateral agreements and needs to be recognised in the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Queensland. Primary healthcare is a very significant setting for the delivery of health promotion, prevention and early identification information and services.

The Queensland Primary Health Networks are uniquely positioned to lead health promotion initiatives given their strong relationships to primary health care providers and 'at-risk' population groups, such as people with chronic/complex conditions. This point is particularly relevant given the crucial role that general practitioners and allied health professionals can play in the delivery of health interventions, if properly supported.<sup>1</sup> The high level of trust that patients place in doctors, nurses and pharmacists, further underscores the need to engage primary health care providers from the outset in the co-design of health promotion strategies and interventions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peckham S., Hann A., Boyce T. 2011, 'Health promotion and ill-health prevention: the role of general practice', *Quality in Primary Care*, vol. 19, iss. 5, pp. 317-23, accessed 24 Nov 2015, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22186174>.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Morgan Research 2015, Roy Morgan Image of Professions Survey 2015 - Nurses still easily most highly regarded – followed by Doctors, Pharmacists & School Teachers, 28 April, accessed 24 Nov 2015, <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6188-roy-morgan-image-of-professions-2015-201504280343>.

It is recommended that the role and function of the PHNs should be recognised in the development of partnerships and collaboration proposed by HWQ. PHNs have a well-established role in needs assessment, evidence-based decision making, prioritisation, commissioning and are a conduit for dissemination of health information with a well-established reach into primary health care. PHNs already partner with both Queensland Health and the Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) in delivering prevention and promotion, for example, in My Health for Life and Hepatitis C prevention programs.

Responsibility for health system planning, management and delivery of services has been largely devolved to regional organisations, in particular the HHSs and PHNs. We recommend that HWQ, as a state-wide body, develop a regional implementation strategy in partnership with HHSs and PHNs that reflects this current practice. This will ensure that the work of HWQ is integrated into existing regional approaches and adds value rather than duplicating or conflicting with existing local efforts.

It is noted that HWQ will be involved in commissioning programs with strong involvement at the local community level. This is also an existing and significant role of the QPHNs (including prevention and promotion in primary healthcare) and there will be a need for close collaboration in commissioning programs in order to maximise their impact and again, to reduce the risk of duplication of health care funding. Consideration could also be given to utilising PHNs as commissioners of services in the seven Queensland regional areas covered by the PHNs.

In the light of the above comments, the QPHN recommends that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar instrument be developed to ensure recognition and facilitation of the important relationship between the two organisations.

The QPHN notes the proposed board composition and would only add that we would expect to see a skills-based board with strong expertise and knowledge of primary health care among the HWQ directors.

Thank you once again for the chance to comment and the Queensland Primary Health Network looks forward to working closely with Health and Wellbeing Queensland to improve the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

Yours sincerely,



Abbe Anderson

**Chair**

**Queensland Primary Health Network**