

The University of Queensland School of Public Health Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry on Establishment of a QLD Health Promotion Commission

The establishment of a QLD Health Promotion Commission (QHPC) would provide exciting opportunities for making some real headway in improving the health of Queenslanders. Effective prevention has the potential not only to significantly improve the health and life expectancy of Queenslanders, but will also deliver dividends in reduced health care expenditure and improved productivity. However, establishing such a Commission comes with some risks that should be considered. Recommendations in light of both risks and opportunities are highlighted briefly below:

- Given the longer timeframes needed to embed and see benefit from health promotion/disease prevention initiatives, the QHPC should be established as a statutory body with bi-partisan support and recurrent funding, to safeguard, as much as possible, its sustainability.
- The real value of a QHPC lies in the potential to engage the multiple government entities (i.e., education, communities, transport, sport, housing, infrastructure) needed to make substantial gains in the health of Queenslanders. Accordingly, the QHPC would benefit from a mandate to work with these government departments to embed health-focussed key performance indicators into their core business and associated reporting.
- Given the effort and resourcing required to set up such a QHPC, consideration should be given to its ability to have influence, such that it can make a demonstrable difference to the health of Queenslanders. The ability of the QHPC to have influence hinges on three key factors:
 - Access to government: the QHPC Commissioner should have regular meetings with the Qld Minister of Health, and the report from the QHPC should be tabled in Parliament.
 - Access to recurrent funding: the ability to direct the allocation of a portion of Queensland health promotion/disease prevention resources is crucial, as without such, the QHPC would remain aspirational at best, with the risk of detracting from, rather than value-adding to, current Queensland Health-directed health promotion initiatives and activities.
 - Demonstrated outcomes: via development and monitoring of a QHPC strategic plan with reporting on well-defined (and optimally quantitative) key performance indicators.
- In terms of governance, the role of the QHPC vis a vis the role of the Health Department needs to be clearly articulated in order to facilitate cooperative and effective working relationships.
- Learnings from Australian and international tobacco control initiatives clearly show that the largest gains have come through policy and legislative approaches. With a bi-partisan mandate, and access to government, the QHPC would optimally be able to influence evidence-based policy and legislative approaches to tackle other urgent health promotion targets, such as obesity.