



27 November 2015

Research Director
Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir / Madam

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is pleased to provide a submission to the Queensland Government's Inquiry into establishing a Queensland Health Promotion Commission (QHPC). The Queensland Government is to be commended for considering establishing the QHPC and supporting preventative health.

USQ's response is aligned with the below Terms of Reference:

1. a) the potential role, scope and strategic directions of a Queensland Health Promotion Commission
b) the effectiveness of collaborative, whole-of-government, and systems approaches for improving and sustain health and wellbeing
2. That, in undertaking the inquiry, the committee should consider:
 - a) approaches to addressing the social determinants of health
 - b) population groups disproportionately affected by chronic disease
 - d) emerging approaches and strategies that show significant potential
 - f) ways of reducing fragmentation in health promotion efforts and increasing shared responsibility across sectors

A Health in All Policies Approach

Health is greatly influenced by a range of [social, cultural, environmental and economic factors](#) beyond the direct influence of the health sector (known as the social determinants of health). In recognition of this impact, health considerations need to be taken into account by policy-makers across sectors and outside the health sector in order to improve population health and health equity. This is known as a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, which in practice has been widely used with considerable success. Most notably is the case of [HiAP in Finland](#) (developed over the past four decades), which enacted the Health Care Act in 2010 to require consideration of health impacts in policy making at the municipal level. Also of note is [Thailand's HiAP approach](#), where citizens have the right to request an assessment when they have concerns about the health impacts of a government decision (a health impact assessment).

HiAP has been adopted in [16 countries](#) across the world (including Australia), mostly within the last decade. Key examples highlighted at the [2013 Global Conference on Health Promotion](#) include Ecuador's 'National Plan of Good Living' and Sweden's 'Vision Zero' initiative. Closer to home the South Australian HiAP

initiative (including the use of health lens analysis) is currently undergoing comprehensive evaluation, however [emerging evidence](#) suggests it has been effective in improving partnerships and intersectoral action towards improving health across government, and in increasing focus on health and wellbeing amongst government policy-makers. Similar to the Finland initiative, within South Australia the [Public Health Act](#) adopted in 2011 requires all local governments to develop health plans, as does the Victorian government, requiring Councils to adopt Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans every 4 years in accordance with the [Health and Wellbeing Act 2008](#). Such an approach could be adapted for use within Queensland, amongst local government areas and other settings such as workplaces and educational institutions.

Targeting Social Determinants through Settings

Healthy living is simple if the places we live our lives make healthy choices easy. As such, making the settings of everyday life where we live, work, learn and play to be more supportive of health has been a fundamental principle of health promotion. Through its recent [Fair Foundations](#) initiative VicHealth have identified the healthy settings approach to have significant potential to address the social determinants of health. This evidence review found that a range of initiatives had been undertaken in settings such as schools and communities in the past, and while important to consider continuing in future, a number of settings including universities have been underutilised as important settings for health promotion. Within England over the past 20 years there has been growing interest in the [Healthy Universities](#) approach – such an approach could be replicated in Australia, given the considerable promise of the Healthy Universities approach to addressing a broad range of the social determinants of health.

Potential Way Forward for QHPC

A HiAP approach targeting social determinants through settings could be supported by the QHPC by ensuring its key roles, strategic direction and scope are based upon securing legislative support and increasing capacity across sectors / settings:

- Advocating for legislative support for a HiAP approach (requiring policies and plans across all sectors) towards taking action on the determinants of health
- Building capacity across government, industry and community to support effective action on the determinants of health through settings by:
 - Improving knowledge through providing expert advice (ie, health impact assessment / health lens analysis toolkits, evidence-based guidelines for settings)
 - Facilitating strategic partnerships and information sharing between / across sectors (ie, establishing councils / networks), and supporting 'health promotion champions / coordinators' within / across sectors
 - Undertaking / funding innovative projects / vital research aiming to improve priority health areas amongst identified target groups (see below) across settings
 - Recognising and rewarding (and ensuring visibility of) excellence in health promotion through developing and coordinating an awards program, and disseminating case studies showcasing winning initiatives

As highlighted previously within the Finland and Thailand approaches to HiAP, and within Australia through the South Australian and Victorian models,

legislative support for HiAP will be necessary to drive policies targeting the social determinants of health within Queensland (through settings). Past funding programs, partnerships, guidelines and other health promotion initiatives have resulted in many professionals across numerous sectors being aware of actions required to create healthy settings and in taking a HiAP approach. While this is a positive outcome, without the 'back-bone' of legislative requirement much needed health promotion action is seen as optional – only implemented if adequate political will and resources exist to support it. This results in short-term gains and a fragmented approach to preventative health. Mandatory HiAP action required by legislation across sectors (via settings) will support organisations in embedding health promotion as core business, enabling continuous, long-term gains in preventative health to be made in future.

Priority Risk & Protective Factors, and Population Groups

Whilst a focus on a HiAP approach via settings is a positive way forward in supporting preventative health action across Queensland, particular attention needs to be given to identified priority risk and protective factors, especially amongst population groups disproportionately affected by chronic disease. [The Health of Queenslanders 2014](#) report identifies a number of priority risk and protective factors requiring improvement within the Queensland population to improve health outcomes, and identifies population groups most in need of support due to the higher levels of chronic disease experienced by these groups. In line with the report's findings, through its actions the QPHC should aim to improve these risk / protective factors amongst those most in need as outlined below.

<i>Where we live, work, learn and play...</i>	<i>...improve risk / protective factors...</i>	<i>... amongst those most in need.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Years & Schools ▪ Universities, Colleges & TAFEs ▪ Workplaces ▪ Retirement Villages ▪ Communities (particularly regional and rural areas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting healthy eating ▪ Encouraging regular physical activity ▪ Preventing tobacco use (especially during pregnancy) ▪ Preventing harm from alcohol ▪ Improving mental wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups ▪ Indigenous Queenslanders ▪ Culturally and linguistically diverse populations

There is promise that the goal of health promotion of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health can be achieved through a HiAP approach, targeting the social determinants of health in the everyday places people live, work, learn and play. Such an approach supported by the QHPC could improve health outcomes and the quality of life of many people living in Queensland.

Yours Sincerely

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