

Our Ref: BS:SL001644



14 June 2017

Committee Secretary
Health, Communities, Disability Services,
and Domestic and Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

RE: Response to the Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017

Thank you for providing Gympie Regional Council with an opportunity to provide comment into the development of the Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017 prior to the Health, Communities, Disability Service and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (The Committee) reporting to Parliament by Monday 24 July 2017.

Gympie Regional Council is strongly committed to working with all of government, service providers and the community in identifying ways we can improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents, particularly in building the capacity of children and families.

In 2016, the Gympie Local Level Alliance prepared the State of Gympie Region's Children report which provided the agreed indicators to measure child wellness in our community. The Alliance is a partnership between Gympie Community Place, Act for Kids and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

In preparing the report, a number of benchmarks indicated areas where the Gympie Region showed significant differences to Queensland and Australian figures. Indicators of significance include:

- The rate of smoking during pregnancy was 22.5% compared to 13.1% in Queensland.
- The percentage of children who were not read to at home before starting school was 10.5% compared to 7.5% in Queensland and 6.5% in Australia.
- The percentage of children who attend a quality early childhood education program in the year before school was 72.6% of children compared to 84.1% in Queensland and 91.3% in Australia.
- The percentage of children who were vulnerable on one or more of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains was 30.4% compared to 26.1% in Queensland and 22% in Australia.
- 6.5% of people in the Gympie Region have a profound or severe disability, which is higher than the percentage for Queensland at 4.4%.
- While most children in the Gympie Region are achieving the minimum standard in NAPLAN, they are falling behind as a proportion of children in the upper two bands.

In addition, the Gympie region as a whole and smaller areas within the region rate low on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage. Their scores are well below the National, Queensland and South Queensland mean of 1000 with areas such as Gympie, Curra and Tin Can Bay scores in the 800s.

Council believes the only way to address these anomalies going forward is through a multi-agency, multi strategy, strengths based approach.

We are very supportive of the longer term community benefit to be gained from the establishment of the Healthy Futures Commission Queensland, as an independent statutory body, recognising the separation of powers as critical to the success of the proposed model.

Evidence suggests that current practice is resulting in more of the same. That is; societal, environmental, socioeconomic and biological factors are becoming increasingly complex and intergenerational, with the increasing challenge of overweight and obesity on the rise. The focus on improving the health and wellbeing of children and families through local area solutions provides a new opportunity to increase the number of healthy Queensland families, rather than the health system alone.

Of particular interest is the focus on the work of the proposed Commission is the differentials in the unhealthy behaviors leading to disease and premature death across Queensland. The Gympie region has high pockets of socio economically disadvantaged with some people in remote and very remote areas where the risk is high. We applaud the committee and government having a greater focus on these areas.

In addition, Council proposes that the committee considers establishing its operation in the Gympie region. At a minimum, the Gympie region would be proud for the Commission to host regular outreach meetings in our municipality. There is also an opportunity for targeted research in order for the Commission to achieve its objectives.

Gympie Regional Council's vision is to be "the natural place to live, work and play". In delivering on this vision, council's strategies include our ability to enhance opportunities for children and young people, with an action to collaborate with community and government stakeholders to deliver improved outcomes for children.

It is with this mandate that Council supports the development of the Healthy Futures Queensland Fund, similar to the Vic Health funding model. This fund will provide opportunities to entities the Commission considers appropriate, such as business, industry, community organisations, academia and local government in new and innovative approaches that contributes to a growing force for social change that improve health outcomes for our residents.

Council congratulates the establishment of the Commission enabling legislation that will strengthen linkages and share responsibility for a new public health movement that focuses on building the capacity of children and families in matters of health and wellbeing.

Should you wish to clarify any matters related to this submission, please contact our Director Corporate & Community Services, Pauline Gordon, telephone 07 54810991 in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BS', written in a cursive style.

Bernard Smith
Chief Executive Officer