



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Public Health Association of Australia (Victorian Branch) submission to the Impact on Victorian Government Service Delivery of Changes to National Partnership Agreements

Introduction

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on public health. The PHAA is also involved in advocacy for public health policy, development, research and training. The PHAA (Victorian Branch) has over 500 members in public health related occupations in health service, research, and government and community sectors.

This submission

The National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on preventive health is an agreement between the commonwealth of Australia and the States & Territories. It was established to address the rising prevalence of lifestyle related chronic diseases and aimed to establish healthy behaviours within settings, encouraged organisations to work collaboratively across sectors and educate the public through campaigns focusing on the four priority areas smoking, nutrition, alcohol & physical activity (SNAP). As outlined in the original agreement, the funding agreement has now expired and is under review.

The PHAA (Victorian branch) represents the interests of our Victorian members, many of whom are public health leaders, practitioners and researchers of many year's standing, who have been intimately and directly engaged in NPA work. PHAA Victoria branch strongly supports future partnerships between Federal and State Governments to enable coordinated action on shared public health priorities. Across Victoria we have seen great collaboration and partnership through the Federal and State funding opportunities for preventive health strategies. These partnerships have assisted in developing innovative and system level changes in health practices across Victoria. Our most current and internationally recognised example is Healthy Together Victoria (HTV).



PHAA Victoria branch is concerned that all of this work will be prematurely stopped at the end of 2015 because further NPA funding will not be forthcoming. This will see a loss in over 120 preventive health workers, a loss in system change activity that has seen innovative progress across sectors, damage to established partnerships across these sectors working together, a loss of trust between health organisations and government and a loss of infrastructure in deprived areas for long term population health improvements.

HTV is Victoria's flagship preventive health effort and a core part of Victoria's world-class health system. It aims to drive the changes necessary to support good health and wellbeing. Preventing chronic disease is a complex challenge that requires a 'comprehensive package' of interventions and a sustained effort over the longer-term. HTV is taking a unique 'complex systems approach' to reducing population-level chronic disease risk. This approach aims for large-scale reach across the Victorian population, initiating action on the systems that influence the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. HTV seeks to place good health at the centre of our everyday lives by creating health-promoting environments in the places where Victorians live, learn, work and play for the long-term.

PHAA (Victorian branch) strongly believes that preventive health programs such as HTV represent valuable strategies to address the rising costs of chronic disease and that government expenditure on public health can provide strong returns on investment. For example, the 2003 publication *'Returns on investment in public health: An epidemiological and economic analysis prepared for the Department of Health and Ageing'* by Applied Economics illustrates the value of government investments in public health programs over time in terms of savings to the health budget. The report shows the estimated net benefits for programs to reduce tobacco consumption and coronary heart disease were \$8.427 billion and \$1.975 billion respectively.¹

PHAA understands the benefits of working across populations and systems with consideration to the determinants of health. These partnership agreements are integral in order to focus on early life and education, health equity across all groups in society and collaboration across sectors to embed health in all policies.



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As advocates for better population health outcomes through prevention, equity principles and the social determinants of health we appreciate the opportunity to make this submission and promote the benefits of collaborative funding agreements and HTV.

Brian Vandenberg

Branch President

PHAA (Victorian Branch)

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¹ Access Economics, *Returns on investment in public health: An epidemiological and economic analysis prepared for the Department of Health and Ageing* (2003)
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