

ADMINISTRATIVE PROTOCOL - PHAA POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. The Purpose of this Protocol

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is committed to promoting the health of the public as well as serving as a professional resource for public health personnel. To do so, PHAA develops evidence based policy options and advocates for these with appropriate bodies, in particular with governments at all levels. This Protocol outlines the process by which PHAA policies can be developed.

2. Types of Policy

PHAA has a variety of policy types that can be used to advance discussion, advocacy and outcomes in public health. These include:

- position statements;
- policy statements;
- interim policies;
- background papers;
- fact sheets; and
- conference resolutions.

2.1 Position Statements – are short written statements, that delineate a policy position for the PHAA. They are a mechanism which can be used to provide a public statement on an emerging public health issue which is important to PHAA in the absence of a Policy Statement. They are succinct, evidence based and include key references, and may be a statement of support for another organisation's policy on a particular issue.

A draft Position Statement may be submitted to the Policy Officer at any time during the year. Once reviewed by the Vice-President (Policy,) a draft Position Statement is referred to the Board for approval. A Position Statement is deemed to be current for one year after which it lapses unless re-endorsed by the Board. All approved Position Statements are published on the PHAA website under the Policy Section.

2.2 Policy Statements – are well developed statements that:

- provide a short background to an issue;
- outline the principles that PHAA sees as essential to improving the issue;
- provide a set of actions that PHAA will advocate for governments and others to undertake to improve the circumstances at issue; and
- delineate an action plan for PHAA. (See Guidelines at **Attachment 1**).

Draft Policy Statements may be submitted to the Policy Officer at any time of the year. Once reviewed by the Vice President (Policy), draft Policy Statements are placed on the Draft Policy Forum in the PHAA Members section of the website and the membership is notified that they are there for comment. The Vice President (Policy) and the Policy Officer consider the issues raised by members and in conjunction with the proposer make any changes necessary for the draft Policy Statement to be considered by the PHAA membership at the Annual Conference.

All approved Policy Statements are published on the PHAA website under the Policy Section. A Policy Statement is deemed to be current for three years after which it must be revised or archived.

2.3 Interim Policy Statements - reflect PHAA positions on emerging issues that require action in advance of a Policy Statement being considered by members at the Annual Conference. Draft Interim Policy Statements must meet the same standards as Policy Statements.

Draft Interim Policy Statements may be submitted to the Policy Officer at any time of the year. Once reviewed by the Vice President (Policy), draft Interim Policies are placed on the Draft Policy Forum in the PHAA Members section of the website for 2 months for members comments before being presented to the Board unless the urgency of the issue requires immediate consideration. They are approved for one year and must be submitted as draft Policy Statements after that time or be archived.

2.4 Background Papers - are an adjunct to a Position or Policy Statement, providing more extensive information. Background Papers are subject to the same peer review processes as the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

Draft Background Papers may be submitted to the Policy Officer at any time during the year. Once reviewed by the Vice-President (Policy,) draft Background Papers are provided to an appropriate reviewer, and after review are referred to the Board for approval. Once accepted by the Board they are published on the PHAA website under the Policy Section. A Background Paper is deemed to be current for three years after which it must be revised or archived.

2.5 Fact Sheets - are documents published periodically by the PHAA to provide information to the public on a critical issue. A Fact Sheet is generally no more than one page and must be referenced and based on evidence to the same level of rigour as PHAA policies.

Draft Fact Sheets may be submitted to the Policy Officer at any time during the year. Once reviewed by the Vice-President (Policy,) draft Fact Sheets are referred to the Board for approval. A PHAA Fact Sheet is deemed to be current for one year after which it lapses unless re-endorsed by the Board. All approved Fact Sheets are published on the PHAA website under the Policy Section.

2.6 Conference Resolutions - are statements that are adopted by participants at the Annual Conference, or at one of PHAA's special issue conferences (see Administrative Protocol - Conference Resolution Guidelines). The Conference Resolutions are submitted to the Vice-President (Policy) for review before publication on the Policy Section of the PHAA website. The Vice President (Policy) may request Special Interest Groups or Branches to consider further development of conference resolutions into draft Position or Policy Statements through the regular policy process.

3. Policy Development and Administration

All PHAA members, whether as individuals or as part of a State Branch or Special Interest Group, may propose new policies or amend existing policies. Special Interest Groups, with their

expertise in specific areas have a particular responsibility to develop a strategic approach to their policy portfolio, to draft policies, to review and comment on proposed policies, and update existing policies. Policy proposers are advised to consult as widely as possible prior to submitting draft policies.

PHAA policy development is coordinated by the Vice-President (Policy) who works with PHAA's Policy Officer, Board Members, SIGs and Branches. Only draft Policy Statements are subject to ratification of the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The annual cycle for draft Policy Statement development is shown at **Attachment 2**.

4. Policy Dissemination and Advocacy

4.1 PHAA policies are published on the PHAA website under Policy Statements as a reference for members, governments, and other interested parties and individuals.

4.2 Following their adoption, a one page 'policy-at-a-glance' summary cover sheet is also developed for each policy by the Policy Officer, in consultation with the relevant Special Interest Group.

4.3 Following their adoption, the Secretariat forwards the policies to relevant governments and organisations and uses them for subsequent media releases, press releases, press statements, budget submissions, policy submissions and other avenues for policy advocacy.

4.4 Each policy is assigned to a Special Interest Group, which acts as the focal point for undertaking and monitoring its implementation and for review and update. This approach allows for the development of three year advocacy action plans that map out key implementation (advocacy) steps, set goals and allow PHAA to assess/evaluate its policy/advocacy achievements.

Guidelines for Policy Proposals

The following guidelines are provided for draft Policy Statements:

Format

- All policy statements should have a brief, informative title.
- Draft Policy Statements should be no more than two or three pages including references which should be in the style required for the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. If the proposer feels more background is needed, then a short Background Paper should be prepared.
- All draft Policy Statements should include:
 - **a preamble** – this usually starts ‘*The Public Health Association of Australia notes...*’. This is followed by a numbered sequence of short indented sentences or paragraphs that set the key background facts for the issue. References should be cited but be the minimum needed to support the key assertions.
 - **affirmation of principles** – this section should start with a sentence such as ‘*The Public Health Association of Australia affirms the following principles:*’. This would be followed by a numbered sequence of short indented sentences.
 - **actions required** – this section outlines what needs to be done to improve the situation and might begin with ‘*The Public Health Association of Australia believes that the following steps should be undertaken:*’. This would be followed by a numbered sequence of short indented sentences. This section should acknowledge current actions and strategies being undertaken by governments and others.
 - **PHAA’s Action Plan** – this should be a set of clauses indicating what PHAA itself will do to advance the policy, starting with ‘*The Public Health Association of Australia resolves to undertake the following actions:*’. A numbered sequence of short indented sentences would follow. Indication should be given on how and by whom the recommended action is to be carried through and when such actions are anticipated across the three year life of the draft Policy Statement.

Content

The following issues should be considered in developing the content of a draft Policy:

- is the intent of this draft Policy Statement consistent with PHAA’s objectives and other PHAA policies (have other relevant PHAA policy instruments been referenced)?
- is this a significant issue in relation to the health of the public and is a Policy Statement the most appropriate policy format for this issue?
- is this the most current and reliable information (scientific and political - e.g. existing strategies and plans)?

- is the proposed position actionable and will it lead to discernible outcomes that we will be able to assess/evaluate? – If not, another policy format (e.g. a Background Paper) may be more appropriate.
- will the proposed position be relevant for the three year life of the Policy Statement?

Annual Cycle for Policy Statement Development

1. Draft Policy Statements may be submitted to the Secretariat at any time during the year, but only those received by 15 June will be considered at the following AGM. This is to ensure that members have sufficient opportunity to provide comments on the drafts before the AGM.
2. On receipt, proposals will be assessed by the Vice President (Policy) and the Policy Officer and will be placed on the Draft Policy Forum in the PHAA Members section of the website for comment by members.
3. Members who have proposed draft Policy Statements are encouraged to revise draft proposals in light of members' comments before the annual conference; and the Vice President (Policy) in consultation with the Policy Officer will assess the need for additional input or discussion of draft proposals prior to the annual conference.
4. All comments and proposed amendments from PHAA Members must be provided via the Policy Forum in the PHAA Members section of the website by 15 August. This is to ensure that the Policy Officer and Vice President (Policy) have time to incorporate comments and amendments into the draft policy statements in consultation with proposers and/or Special Interest Groups prior to the annual conference in late September.
5. Where the Vice President (Policy) decides that a policy remains substantially the same after review, s/he can elect to send the policy directly to the Policy Forum at the annual conference, by-passing publication in the Draft Policy Forum in the PHAA Members section of the website. It is expected that this process will apply for a small minority of policies.
6. Draft Policy Statements are presented by proposers and subject to final minor revision at the Policy Forum at the Annual Conference. If draft policies are slightly amended at the Policy Forum, revised copies must be provided to the Secretariat by 9am the following morning. Policy proposers are responsible for revision of draft policy, with production support from the Secretariat. Any amended copies are printed and distributed 24 hours in advance of the AGM at Annual Conference.
7. The Vice President (Policy) formally proposes the acceptance of draft Policy Statements at the AGM. These are usually in two packages, for adoption by the members:
 - a. Consensus items are considered in one group, unless the meeting (by a simple majority) determines otherwise;

b. Items where there is no consensus are presented separately for ratification or rejection (but not amendment) unless the meeting (by simple majority) determines otherwise.

8. Policy proposers must be present at the Policy Forum and AGM to speak to proposals and answer questions.
9. Following their adoption at the AGM, a one page 'policy-at-a-glance' summary cover sheet is also developed for each policy by the Policy Officer, in consultation with the relevant Special Interest Group.
10. The Secretariat posts adopted Policy Statements on the PHAA policy web page and provides links between relevant policy statements (e.g. a Background Paper and a Policy Statement).
11. The Secretariat will maintain a rolling three year program for policy renewal and advocacy. Special Interest Groups will be advised which policies are due for renewal in the coming year after the Annual Conference. Any policy that is not kept current will be archived on the Vice President (Policy)'s advice after consultation with the appropriate SIG. The Vice President (Policy) can approve a one year roll-over for a policy that is currently undergoing revision, but which will not be ready for the AGM deadlines.
12. SIGs are also responsible, in conjunction with the Policy Officer for undertaking an annual evaluation of the advocacy actions undertaken, focusing on outputs and outcomes, especially any tangible evidence of positive change. This will be recorded in the PHAA's Annual Report.