

## **34<sup>th</sup> PHAA Annual Conference – “Mobilising Public Health”**

The 2002 conference program centred on the theme of mobilising public health and focused on action and achievements in public health, its relevance and capacity, and how much public health offers, especially in times of scarce resources. Emphasis was placed on demonstrating successful public health programs and advocacy projects, from grass roots levels to higher administration.

The conference integrated the sub-themes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Well-being; Refugee Policy and Status; Health Surveillance and Screening; Technologies in Public Health; and Public Health Administration and Structure. Within these themes, the important issues of inequalities in society and their impact on health, and other relevant social issues for Australia today were explored. The conference also looked at emerging frontiers in population health, and delegates heard about the latest initiatives in population screening and what bio-medical technologies have to offer public health.

### **Conference Resolutions**

#### Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Health & Welfare

That \$400 million extra funding be provided for Aboriginal Comprehensive Primary Health Care as a matter of urgency in order to assist the process of closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health status. AND THAT one possible source for such funding could be found by redirecting only 20% of the private health insurance rebate to Aboriginal comprehensive primary health care.

#### NO WAR AGAINST IRAQ

- Recognising the inhumanity of the current economic sanctions against Iraq
- Recognising the current negative impact of the Iraqi regime on the health of the Iraqi people
- Recognising that further military action will worsen the suffering of the people of Iraq and cause many more civilian injuries and deaths.
- Believing that military action will increase the number of refugees and asylum seekers, and
- Noting the existing PHAA Policy on Public Health and War
- deplores the negative impact of the current economic sanctions against Iraq
- strongly opposes any military action planned or threatened by the US and its allies whether under or without a United Nations Security Council resolution to support it
- strongly opposes any Australian involvement in any such military action and so asks the Board of the PHAA to:
- urgently call on the Australian Government and the Opposition not to commit Australia to any military action against Iraq

- urge the Australian government to support weapons inspectors and other non-military means to resolve the current situation
- publicise this resolution to the Australian public through the media

#### STATEMENT AGAINST THE JOINT DEFENCE FACILITY PINE GAP

- Recognising that the JDFPG is violating the sovereignty of the Arrernte nation
- Recognising that the JDFPG is involved in the National Defence Initiative that is militarising space and introducing a new round to the nuclear arms race
- Recognising that the operations of the JDFPG are secret to the Australian parliament and people
- Recognising that the JDFPG will be involved in any war against Iraq, and
- Noting the existing PHAA Policies on Nuclear Weapons and on Public Health and War

asks that the PHAA:

- Supports the efforts of this campaign to have the operations of the JDFPG made public
- Express this support to the Pine Gap Protest group in Alice Springs this week
- publicise this resolution to the Australian public through the media

#### NOTE:

The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap (JDFPG) is a US base that is situated near Alice Springs in Central Australia. It is involved in signals intelligence gathering. As such it has a role in US war fighting. It also has a role in the new National Missile Defence (NMD) "Star Wars". It may also have a role in arms control monitoring, but this is secret and so is unassessable.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> National PHAA Incarceration Conference - "Human Rights, Human Wrongs, Human Costs"**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> PHAA Conference looked at Incarceration Health, taking a broader perspective than the first conference held in 1999. While prisons remain the dominant issue, reflecting that adult offenders form the majority of individuals incarcerated in Australia, this conference focused on health issues of juvenile offenders within Youth Detention Centres and Immigration Detainees and Asylum seekers, both within Immigration Detention Centres and in the community.

While there have been positive developments in prison health around Australia since the 1999 conference, significant public health issues remain. These include the special needs of some prisoner sub-groups, such as females, Indigenous prisoners, prisoners with mental illness and prisoners with a disability. Hepatitis C prevalence remains unacceptably high within prison populations and prisons remain a source of hepatitis C infection for the wider community. Despite the high prevalence of risky behaviours for disease

transmission within incarcerated populations, some harm minimisation measures widely available in the general community are not accessible to prisoners. These are not issues that relate solely to populations that are out of sight and out of mind. The high turnover and short sentence length of the majority of people incarcerated ensures that these are important issues for us all.

The social and political aspects of incarceration also have public health ramifications, although these may be overlooked. Thus, consideration was given to the effect of incarceration on family, dependants and significant others who may be adversely affected by the incarceration of a loved one.

### **CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS – APRIL 2003**

- Note with regret the excessive incarceration of Australian citizens, and the inappropriate use of 'deprivation of liberty' for citizens with mental health and drug and alcohol conditions.
- Applaud the recent reversal of incarceration rates in Western Australia.
- Call on all jurisdictions to use 'deprivation of liberty' as a punishment of last resort, and to strive to contain the current abuse of power upon ill citizens.
- Acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of Aboriginal incarceration and the impacts of incarceration on families and communities.
- Applaud the recent reversal of Aboriginal incarceration rates in Western Australia.
- Call on all jurisdictions to address the issue of disproportionate incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a matter of urgency.
- Note the lack of progress in developing national minimal standards for health care of Australian inmates and detainees.
- Call on all jurisdictions to plan toward the conduct of a national inmate health survey by 2006, as the basis for evidence-based definition of health needs of inmates, detainees and their families.
- Note with abhorrence the long-term detention of asylum seekers.
- Reject the detention of children and their families, under any circumstances.
- Call for the introduction of short term reception centres in central locations in place of existing detention centres in remote areas.
- Call for the immediate release of all children and their families in immigration detention.
- Note the early stages in the development and promotion of model health standards for use in Australian correctional and juvenile detention institutions.
- Call on all jurisdictions, through the Australasian Council of Prison Health Services, to further develop these standards, with reference to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates.

- Note the lack of progress in developing and promoting a healthier prison environment for the mutual benefit of staff and inmates, and their families.
- Call on all jurisdictions, through the Australasian Council of Prison Health Services and the Australian Correctional Ministers Advisory Council, to further develop prisons and detention centres as 'healthy settings', consistent with the Principles of the Ottawa Charter.