



**Public Health Association of Australia  
(WA Branch)**

**WA PHAA NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to the July 2009 PHAA  
newsletter.

**Message from the President**

Welcome to the midyear newsletter for 2009 from the PHAA WA Branch. Public health in Australia has certainly been on the political agenda. Advocacy At the national and State level continues with significant contributions by WA PHAA members. The recent Federal budget indicates substantial funding for prevention related programs especially in priority areas including Aboriginal Health, Alcohol and Obesity.

The recent report on the national review of obesity also acknowledges the importance of prevention, and the need for a comprehensive approach.

Unfortunately, despite considerable support for such health promotion initiatives, the alcohol, food and advertising industries still wield far too much influence. There is still plenty of opportunity for PHAA members to advocate for strict controls over marketing of unhealthy products, and for stronger controls over their availability and pricing.

Another national initiative that had considerable input by WA members is the recently released report on the review of the NHMRC research funding. Again there are positive

indications of benefits for public health research.

On the local front, the recent Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) Seminar was very successful. Thanks to the Professional Development Committee, and particularly Jonine Jancey and her Curtin Health Promotion students for organising this event that attracted over 70 people to the venue, plus others via videoconference. Some other exciting professional development events are planned and these are described throughout the newsletter.

I encourage members to contact me if they have any concerns or would like the committee to follow up on any public health issues.

**Prof Peter Howat, President PHAA  
(WA)**

**Recent Professional Development  
Opportunity - Foetal Alcohol  
Syndrome Seminar**

**By Natalie Hobson**

The PHAA (WA) together with Curtin University Health Promotion students recently held a well attended seminar detailing the current perspectives on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in Australia at Grace Vaughan House. An impressive selection of speakers presented including Professor Carol Bower from the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and panel speakers Heather D'Antoine, Neil Guard, Terry Murphy and Nyanda McBride. The speakers were from a variety of health areas and backgrounds, highlighting the need for a multifaceted, multidisciplinary

approach towards the prevention of FAS. The panel members answered questions from interested health professionals, including those from eleven regional Western Australia areas linked via videoconferencing. The evening was a success for all involved and emphasised the need for a combined effort in terms of Western Australia's current stance, actions and direction for the future prevention and management of FAS.

#### **PHAA WA Christmas Sundowner**

PHAA WA Branch celebrated the end of the 2008 year and the festive season by inviting members to a sundowner at the Dalkeith Nedlands Bowls club. The sundowner was attended by about 15 PHAA members. After some helpful club staff gave a much-needed lesson on lawn-bowls techniques to those attending, we had a few friendly games of bowls, some drinks and nibbles overlooking the Swan River. PHAA WA Branch will be organising some more fun and physically active social events later in the year.

#### **Professional Development Opportunities**

Thursday 30 July –Dr Helen Caldicott – International expert on public health & uranium mining.

Tuesday 8 September – UWA Club Lt General John Sanderson, AC speaking on Indigenous health issues.

November (TBA) Dr David Sleet – International expert on road safety.

**Details on these events will be forwarded to Members via email.**

The PHAA WA President, Peter Howat and Vice President, Melissa Stoneham had an hour long meeting with Hon Kim Hames, Minister for Health in January this year. At this meeting, the purpose and benefits of the PHAA were described as well as providing an outline of our priority issues and policies. Follow up materials particularly around actions that could be taken in the area of Indigenous health were forwarded to the Minister.

#### **PHAA Awards - 2009**

The PHAA (WA) has several awards created to recognise excellence in public health by groups & individuals. Three new awards will be offered in 2009.

##### Student Awards (up to 3 /yr)

Criteria: academic excellence + contributions to public health via committee or other volunteer work. Applicants to have recently completed a postgraduate degree (Masters/ Doctorate) in a public health discipline at a WA University.

##### Community Group Award

Criteria: recognition for outstanding contributions to public health, preferably over an extended period.

##### Community Individual Award

Criteria: recognition for outstanding contributions to public health, preferably over an extended period.

##### Early Career Award

Criteria: recognition for outstanding contributions to public health.

Applicants need to be 'early career' e.g. within 5 years of commencing a career in public health and a PHAA member.

##### Indigenous Award

Criteria: recognition for outstanding contributions that have the potential to improve health outcomes in Indigenous communities, and/or has achieved improvement in the lives of Indigenous peoples, preferably over an extended period.

## **Public Health News Around the World**

The PHAA develop regular releases about articles in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. Why not check them out at <http://www.phaa.net.au/journalMedia.php>

### **Obesity – Weighing It Up**

#### **A Recent Release**

On 11 May 2009, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) published the latest National Health Survey 2007-08 figures. The Survey found that more adult Australians were overweight or obese in 2007-2008 compared with 1995 (when the previous survey was conducted). The Survey found that 68 percent of adult men and 55 percent of adult women were overweight or obese. This shows a growing incidence over 12 years as only 64 percent of men and 49 percent of women were overweight or obese in 1995. For children, there was a significant increase in the proportion who are obese from 5.2 percent in 1995 to 7.8 percent in 2007-08.

The House of Representatives – Standing Committee on Health and Ageing inquiry has released its report on obesity in Australia. Throughout the inquiry Committee members travelled the country, visiting capital cities, regional areas and rural and remote communities to gather information on what the costs of obesity actually mean. The report complements the National Preventative Health Taskforce process insofar as it makes general recommendations on what governments, industry, individuals and the broader community can do to

reverse our growing waistlines. The report differs in that it also, importantly, serves as a platform for many stakeholders to share their views and tell their stories. As some of the text and photos in the report attest, there are some quite exciting and innovative solutions already underway, spanning from well-designed urban developments to council-run exercise programs in parks to community gardens and cooking classes.

### **Many teens believe they will die young – Study from Minnesota.**

Nearly 15 percent of teenagers think they're going to die young, leading many to drug use, suicide attempts and other unsafe behavior, new research suggests.

The study, based on a survey of more than 20,000 kids, challenges conventional wisdom that says teens engage in risky behavior because they think they're invulnerable to harm. Instead, a sizable number of teens may take chances "because they feel hopeless and figure that not much is at stake," said study author Dr. Borowsky, a researcher at the University of Minnesota.

That behavior threatens to turn their fatalism into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Over seven years, kids who thought they would die early were seven times more likely than optimistic kids to be subsequently diagnosed with AIDS. They also were more likely to attempt suicide and get in fights resulting in serious injuries.

## Upcoming Conference and Professional Development Opportunities

39<sup>th</sup> National Public Health Association Conference – Making a Difference  
28-30 September 2009

Canberra

<http://www.phaa.net.au/conferences.php>

Oceania Tobacco Control 2009  
Reducing Inequality through tobacco control

7-9 October 2009, Darwin

<http://www.ceitc.org.au/OceaniaTC2009>

20<sup>th</sup> IUHPE Conference on Health Promotion

Health, Equity and Sustainable Development

11-15 July 2010, Geneva Switzerland.

[www.iuhpeconference.net](http://www.iuhpeconference.net)

Environmental Health Risk

21-23 September 2009

New Forest, United Kingdom

<http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2009/ehr09/index.html>

8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Urban Health

19-23 October 2009

Nairobi Kenya

<http://www.icuh2009.org>

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION?**

**Do you have a contribution for the PHAA (WA) newsletter? Please forward to Melissa Stoneham at [melissagiv@bigpond.com](mailto:melissagiv@bigpond.com)**



### Picturing health: 35 years of photojournalism at WHO

WHO Archives holds many black and white photographs showing the work done in various health-related professions by people from all parts of the world. This exhibit offers a selection of photostories taken by photographers from the 1950s to the 1980s. These images illustrate health programs established by governments and by WHO. The pictures presented in the photo galleries come from the files of the WHO "Photographic Archives, Sub-fonds Photographers" and they are accompanied by their original captions. Visit the archives at

<http://who.int/features/2009/photoarchives/en/index.html>



The 2009 Report of the Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals, released in New York on 15 June, outlines how countries are making the protection of vulnerable people, particularly women and children, a priority in their aid programs. The report can be found at [http://www.USAID.gov.au/publications/pdf/lead\\_by\\_example.pdf](http://www.USAID.gov.au/publications/pdf/lead_by_example.pdf)

