

Branch news: Smoke-free in Tasmania

▣ **Leigh Blizzard**, *Menzies Centre for Population Health Research, University of Tasmania*

An important milestone in public health in Tasmania occurred on April 3 this year when the Legislative Council, the upper house of Tasmania's parliament, passed the Public Health Amendment (Smoke-free Areas) Bill 2001.

The Bill designates as smoke-free areas most enclosed workplaces, public places including shopping centres, and some outdoor areas such as reserved seating areas at cultural and sporting venues. Smoking will still be permitted in bars, but not at the times that meals are served and a reasonable smoke free area of equal amenity has to be provided at all times.

The Councillors made several amendments, but none that compromised the legislation. It was a close call nonetheless. The section that related to bar areas – precluding smoking at the times that meals are available – was passed by only one vote.

This was another significant accomplishment for Mark Jacobs and his team in the Department of Health and Human Services in Tasmania. It was a personal triumph for their health minister, the Honourable Judy Jackson MHA, who showed great determination and courage in the face of a concerted and well-funded opposition.

The Australian Hotels Association (AHA), British American Tobacco and

Philip Morris provided packages for parliamentary members that included individualised videos. I have not seen the videos, but understand that they featured young people working in hotels in the electorate of the member and that these young people pleaded on tape that they would lose their jobs if the legislation went through. I can at least verify that the prospect of job losses was a recurrent theme raised by the AHA in the public briefings provided to Legislative Councillors. I heard AHA State Director Daniel Leesong tell the Councillors that kitchen staff in hotels had already been given notice. "That's a reality", he concluded.

Our branch was there to provide support. Local PHAA members provided media interviews, wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers, lobbied politicians and briefed the Legislative Councillors.

But we were only a very small part of a concerted campaign by health groups, under the umbrella of the Smoke-Free Tasmania alliance, to influence public opinion and secure the passage of this legislation. Starring roles were played by Wayne John (National Heart Foundation) who is a member of our branch executive, Mike Wilson (Quit Tasmania), Lawson Ride (Cancer Council of Tasmania), Richard Wood Baker (Lung Foundation) and Darren Matthewson (Australian Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union). I admit that Darren's impassioned plea on behalf of his members, who dare not complain otherwise, brought a lump to my



throat. And let us not forget the support of Anne Jones (ASH Australia), who has been our magnificent ally over a number of years.

And the picture? That is our publicity-shy Branch President, Dave Abbott, looking quite at home – but not enjoying the smoke-filled atmosphere – in a local bar. The barman is Mike Wilson (Quit Tasmania), wearing a gas mask to make the point that tobacco smoke pollution is an occupational health hazard for the many Tasmanians employed in the liquor and hospitality industry.

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Public Health Research Advisory Group

by Fran Baum, *PHRAG Convenor*



PHRAG has been reactivated in 2001 particularly in response to the very poor results achieved by public health researchers in the 2000

NH&MRC funding round. The December Council meeting resolved to send a letter to Professor Warwick Anderson (Chair of the NH&MRC Research Committee). His response went somewhat towards an explanation but left questions unanswered. It is vital that the public health research community is given a fair deal by the NH&MRC system and PHRAG will be working hard to achieve this.

PHRAG has been established with the following terms of reference. The broad goal of the PHAA PHRAG will be to promote and advocate public health research and development so that members, stakeholders and the Australian community will benefit from a sound, strategic and shared research base in public health.

Specifically, the Committee will:

- 1 Identify, promote and advocate opportunities for training and continuing professional development in public health research for PHA members
- 2 Contribute to informed public and professional debate about public health research
- 3 Encourage the monitoring of public health research funding in Australian and contribute to efforts to increase funding in absolute terms
- 4 Encourage best practice in research through recognised awards, including liaison with and enhancement of PHERT,

dissemination through the Journal and other strategies

- 5 Encourage more effective links between public health policy, research and practice
- 6 Encourage PHA representation on Research Committee, Strategic Research Development Committee and other relevant committees and working parties of the NHMRC and advocate for increased representation and offer support to the representatives.
- 7 Liaise with the Population Health Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health & Aged Care Services, the National Public Health Partnership, other government health bureaucracies and non-government organisations with an involvement or stake in public health research and development.
- 8 Conduct *ad hoc* workshops, seminars and other activities to achieve its objectives.
- 9 Maintain a 'watching brief' over developments in medical and public health research at national level.

The membership of PHRAG is as follows:

Fran Baum (Convenor)
John MacCallum
Jeanette Ward
Judith Lumley (National Executive)
Bruce Armstrong
Vivian Lin
Janet Hiller
Brian Oldenburg
Simon Chapman
Mandy Thrift
Executive Director (ex officio)

PHRAG would like to attract one or two younger members at the early stages of their research career. We would welcome volunteers to join PHRAG

from any young researchers resident in the Northern Territory, Tasmania or Western Australia who would like to influence national research policies and funding priorities. Please contact me if you would like to explore joining PHRAG.

The first official duty I undertook on behalf of PHRAG was to attend a workshop convened by Prof Warwick Anderson (Chair NH&MRC Research Committee). The focus of this workshop was on looking forward and discussing options for developing public health research within NHMRC. A range of options was discussed including more doctoral and post-doctoral training opportunities and the establishment of centres of excellence in public health research. PHRAG has resolved to keep monitoring the work of the Research Committee to ensure that public health receives its share of the much increased funds available to NH&MRC following the Wills Report.

PHRAG has met once by teleconference and worked out a plan of work for the year. The main focus of this is on lobbying the NHMRC and publicising the existing opportunities for public health researchers. We have submitted an abstract to the PHAA Annual conference for a one and half hour workshop which will aim to make the NH&MRC system more transparent. Prof Anderson, Prof Sally Redman and PHRAG member A/Prof Jeanette Ward have agreed to speak at the workshop.

Please contact me or other members of the PHRAG if there are issues you would like us to pick up or to provide feedback or ideas.

Fran.Baum@flinders.edu.au

Advances of the all Important Social Program

'2001: A Public Health Odyssey'

September 23rd to 26th 2001, Hilton Hotel Sydney



Just to keep you updated and also to invigorate your enthusiasm, the Annual Conference Social Committee: NSW Branch, is proud to provide PHAA members with a brief progress report on the social side of our upcoming conference.

Firstly, we are extremely happy to announce that we have confirmed the Art Gallery of New South Wales as the venue for our Welcome Reception on the afternoon of Sunday 23rd September 2001. The Art Gallery, established in 1875, is one of Australia's great cultural institutions. More than one million visitors each year enter the stately Gallery building, which houses some of the finest art in the country. The Gallery is located in the Royal Botanic Gardens, only a short walk from the Hilton Hotel. At the Welcome Reception you will enjoy

canapés and cocktails in the majestic surrounds of the Gallery. In addition, you will be invited to experience the mystery of the Space Odysseys display, a temporary exhibition being hosted by the Art Gallery conveniently in time with our conference. And if that's not enough, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, the traditional landowners, have agreed to perform an official welcoming ceremony as part of the reception.

Secondly, on to the Conference Dinner, in the evening of Monday 24th September. Dockside at Cockle Bay Warf, Darling Harbour has been confirmed as the venue for our Conference Dinner. Dockside is located waterside at Sydney's entertaining Darling Harbour, only a short walk or monorail ride from the Hilton Hotel. By joining us at the Conference Dinner you will be assured

of tantalising food, great drinks, memorable company and fantastic entertainment (some even say there may be a chance of impromptu singing by certain famed PHAA members). Whether non professional singing interests you or not, the night promises to be one full of laughs and hopefully a great way to spend time with colleagues away from the usual work environment (oh yes, and we do promise to have professional entertainment as well).

More detail on the social program will be provided with the conference registration papers. In the mean time, we look forward to hosting your stay in Sydney and are hopeful that you will all be able to join us for the social program.

*The Annual Conference Social Committee:
NSW Branch.*



The AIHW has recently released the 1998 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: detailed first finding (cat. No. PHE27) and the 1998 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: State and Territory Results. For copies and further information visit the AIHW website at www.aihw.gov.au or contact the publications officer, AIHW on (02) 6244 1032.



National Breastfeeding Strategy

The Department of Health and Aged Care has recently released the National Breastfeeding Strategy. Copies can be obtained from the Publications Distribution Officer, MDP 129, GPO Box 9848 Canberra ACT 2601. Ph: (02) 6289 8654. Email: phd.publications@health.gov.au



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The Australian National University Centre for Mental Health Research has released its Annual Scientific Report for 2000. Of particular interest is the information on the programme of research in 2000 and the list of publications. Copies can be obtained by calling (02) 6125 2741

NOTE: Article amendment

Andy Quan of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations has asked that we provide the following clarifications running from our 'Para 55' article in the February 2001 edition. Firstly the AFAO is not holding its AGM before CHOGM, rather it is the Australian Council for Overseas AID (ACFOA). (For more information about AFAO's involvement in CHOGM you can contact Andy at: aquan@afao.org.au). Secondly the 6th International Congress of AIDs in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) will provide an opportunity for community, scientists, government officials and industry to learn from one another at their meeting in Melbourne. This is the most important HIV/AIDS Conference in the region during 2001, and organisers are hoping for wide participation. More information can be found at the website: www.icaap.conf.au

PHAA's Policy Action Committee

by Helen Keleher, *Vice-President Policy*



Following approval by November Council, a PHAA Policy Action Committee (PAC) has been formed with the following membership:

Helen Keleher (Chair)
Terry Slevin (Vice-President, Development)
Paul Laris
Victoria Toulkidis (Secretary)
Jenny Lewis
Angela Taft (SIG rep)
Pieta Laut
Julie Woollacott (Secretariat support)

This is a vibrant, active group of people, who are keenly interested in PHAA's policy platform. Our Terms of Reference were approved at April Council.

Policy Action Committee Terms of Reference

1. Report via Vice-President (Policy) to Executive meetings, Council and Annual General Meetings of the Association;
2. Coordinate the development of new and revised policies to ensure a planned approach to the policy portfolio of the Association;
3. Disseminate, promote and enable advocacy of PHAA policies; and,
4. Monitor impact of PHAA policies

The PAC is developing strategies with regard to policy dissemination implementation and policy development. Our current priorities are to disseminate new policies from the 2000 conference to Ministers and other stakeholders; coordinate the development of Fact Sheets for the top ten public health issues for the 2001 Election Manifesto; maintain the Friends of Medicare campaign; and streamlining of our Policy positions. The PAC is working through any processes that are necessary to support the development of succinct and timely PHAA Position Statements that have the capacity to respond to emerging issues, as an adjunct to standard Policies. We welcome your feedback and ideas.

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National Priorities for Alcohol Research

by Fran Baum



I represented PHAA at a national workshop convened by the Commonwealth DHAC to develop national priorities for alcohol research.

The process followed at the workshop was excellent. Our facilitator was Dr. Norman Swan of the ABC's *Health Report*. He was a witty, fast-moving and perceptive facilitator and contributed considerably to the enjoyment and value of the workshop.

The workshop started over dinner (where we were sat with selected colleagues whom we were to work with during the next day). After dinner we were treated to a debate on the proposition "No more research is required in alcohol, we just need to apply the knowledge we have already". The debate was fast and furious and caused much amusement. The following day we led through a careful process which culminated in the development of principles to guide alcohol research and some broad priorities for research...Each participant was provided with a set of background papers for the workshop which covered a number of areas including: patterns of alcohol use, acute alcohol related harm, public policy and alcohol related harm, community-based interventions and interventions for alcohol dependence, abuse and excessive drinking. The principles and priorities will be available in a report from the Commonwealth, here I would just like to make a few observations.

Firstly, I came away with an impression that alcohol researchers are somewhat cut off from the main stream of public health research. I suspect they are far from unique in this. Too often we see

public health concerns in a series of silos: healthy lifestyles, suicide prevention, illicit drug prevention, depression awareness, injury prevention, nutrition promotion to mention a few. Yet so many of the underlying causes of alcohol misuse mirror those we might cite in many other areas of public health. So this begs the question of how we can move further towards a more comprehensive and integrated public health practice and break down the silos that we all set up. One of the reasons I have maintained interest in the WHO Healthy Cities initiative is that it offers the opportunity to integrate health promotion endeavours and avoid the silo mentality.

I also found it startling that the epidemiology presented concentrated rather single mindedly on isolating a series of risk factors and related these to demographic groups. Of course this information is important but I would love to have seen some discussion of the epidemiology that is highlighting the importance of social and economic inequities to health outcomes. A number of us raised this issue at the workshop and received a sympathetic hearing. It is important for any research agenda to consider the interactions between so-called risky behaviour in relation to alcohol use and individual's social and economic status.

Finally, the workshop provided an opportunity to interact with people from the wine, brewing and hotel industry. The representatives I met were interested in promoting responsible drinking and certainly appreciated the importance of policy to ensuring this. One told an interesting story of how national competition policy had been invoked to say that hoteliers were not able to refuse a drunk patron a further drink on the grounds that this patron had as much

right to purchase a drink as any other person. This suggests that exploration of the impact of macro-economic policy on public health is a topic we should be paying more attention to.

All in all this was a well-conceived workshop. Look out for the proceedings I am sure they will be worthwhile reading.



Short Course in Social Epidemiology and Social Determinants of Health

19 - 23 June, 2001

This course is taught by renowned Harvard Professor and Social Epidemiologist, Prof. Ichiro Kawachi. The course aims to provide skills for improving the understanding of health managers, researchers, and program designers about issues of health inequalities and the social determinants of health as well as insights into how these determinants of health can be tackled. The course also offers opportunities for participants to obtain hands-on skills in qualitative methods in the social determinants of health or multilevel modelling techniques in social epidemiology.

For further information contact Sharon Melder, School of Health Sciences, Deakin University (03) 9244 6091 or email sharonm@deakin.edu.au webpage http://www.hbs.deakin.edu.au/health_short_course.htm

Women's Health in a Multi-cultural World: 25th International Congress of the Medical Women's International Association

by **Angela Taft**, *National Convenor,
Women's Health SIG*



Two members of PHAA were honored at the 25th International Congress of the Medical Women's Association (MWIA) held from 19th-23rd

April this year in Sydney. I was delighted to receive an invitation from MWIA's Australian conference secretariat to attend the conference as WHSIG convenor and collaborate with their policy committee. Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, the newly appointed Governor of New South Wales and a PHAA member, opened the conference.

Plenary speaker and long-standing active member Dr Maxine Whittaker was honored by the Indian Medical Women's Association for her wonderful work with and for women's health in many developing countries. During her plenary oration, Maxine described her recent work with Vietnamese women rice farmers, where she examined women's views of how independence, the new Vietnamese economy and national pride led to pressure to produce more rice. This resulted in increased insecticides and fertilisers in the paddy water, in which the women were submersed all day and about which they expressed concern

for the effects on their reproductive health. Women also felt constrained by their work demands to lift heavy loads, although cautioned by their doctors not to after labor and delivery. Maxine highlighted the importance of women's beliefs and practices when medical practitioners and health policy-makers targeted Vietnamese women's health.

This was a truly international conference, with many women from many continents and countries – it gave the impression of a vibrant female (albeit medical) united nations and speakers were impressive in their work with and for women and children. The plenary speakers addressed, among other topics: women's health, multi-culturalism and human rights; prevention of HIV mother-to-child transmission; and socio-demographic determinants of obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. Dr Mula Muleta from



Dr Elizabeth Hindmarsh, Chair of the joint RACGP/ PHAA working party on Emergency Contraception and Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of NSW
Photo courtesy of Starfish Studio

the Fistula Hospital spoke movingly of the plight of very poor female children married off young, whose first childbearing often resulted in stillbirths and fistulas. The fistulas may then result in women's ostracism or rejection by husbands and/or families, as urinary and sometimes faecal incontinence is a consequence. Women may then be forced to beg or starve, if their communities also reject them. Surgery at the the hospital can completely restore women's health, if they know about and can reach it. Her presentation resulted in moves to support the hospital, which is understaffed and under-resourced and a resolution about the plight of girl-children.

Conference papers and discussions focussed on diverse themes such as: indigenous health; women and children living in violence; women in medicine; mental health; culture and health; lesbian and adolescent health etc. Other non-medical attendees from reproductive rights organisations such as the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance and Children By Choice, allowed opportunities to discuss collaboration with PHAA over policy advocacy. I also attended MWIA's annual congress where policy resolutions were smoothly passed on many issues, several in tune with our own. Dr Gabrielle Casper, an Australian gynaecologist, is the new MWIA president. Overall, it was a pleasure and privilege to attend the conference and we hope to continue the collaboration now well established.



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A two-week plenary seminar in Washington, DC area at the end of the program (November 2002)

New Century Scholars will be expected to pursue research activities related to the NCS research theme throughout the program year; to maintain contact with one another as a means to expand their own research directions; and to participate in all activities of the program.

The New Century Scholar Distinguished Leader for Challenges of Health in a Borderless World is Ilone Kickbusch, Head of the Division of Global Health at Yale University School of Medicine, in the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health.

Applicants should have a PhD or equivalent terminal degree in a relevant field, a national / international reputation in their field and a high level of achievement through publication, research grants and other professional achievements. They should also be able to demonstrate their ability to work in a multidisciplinary team.

Application forms and further information are available from www.iie.org/cies

Australian applications close COB Monday, 16th July 2001
and must be posted with five original copies (including references) to the
Australian-American Fulbright Commission, PO Box 9541, Deakin, ACT 2600.

One Australian applicant will be recommended by the Commission and final selection will take place by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars in the US. For further information contact:

Mark Darby, Executive Director, Australian-American Fulbright Commission Ph 02 6260 4460

What's on

12-14 June 2001

First National Tobacco Conference, Hilton International Hotel, Adelaide, SA. Early Bird Registration by 19 May 2001. Standard Registration after 19 May 2001. For further information call (08) 8363 1307, email info@fconventions.com.au or visit <http://conference.cancersa.org.au>

29 June - 3 July 2001

Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, 251 Faraday St Carlton, VIC 3053. The course covers epidemiological principles of study design and method, evidence-based practice, sociodemographic factors in reproductive and perinatal health, and the availability and use of state and national data. For more information on the course: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/csmch/>

4-6 July 2001

Public Health Association of New Zealand Conference: *A Fair Go - Achieving Equity in Health* Waipuna Hotel, Auckland. For more information please contact Jan Tonkin, the Conference Company, PO Box 90-040, Auckland or emialpha@tcc.co.nz. The Public Health Association of New Zealand can also be contacted by (PH): +64 4 472 3060, (FAX): +64 4 472 3059 email: pha@actrix.gen.nz and website: www.pha.org.nz/conferences

15-17 July 2001

3rd National PHAA Food & Nutrition Conference: *Eating Well into the Future* Carlton Crest, Melbourne. For further information please contact the PHAA secretariat email: conference@phaa.net.au or online at www.phaa.naet.au

23-26 September 2001

33rd PHAA Annual Conference 2001: *A Public Health Odyssey - Popular Culture, Science and Politics* Hilton Hotel, Sydney. For further information

on the conference please contact the PHAA secretariat email: conference@phaa.net.au or online at www.phaa.net.au

26-29 October 2001

Genetics and Public Health Short Course. Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of Sydney. Cost: \$950 (places subject to availability). This will be a problem-based course covering genetic science, epidemiology, regulation, law, consumer issues, psychosocial aspects, education, media, economics, public health, population health policy and GM foods. Further information contact: Gabrielle O'Sullivan 02-9863 5459, Email: gosullivan@optushome.com.au

17 November 2001

Ninth National Symposium on Hepatitis B and C
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
Contact: (03) 9288 3580
E-mail: belote@svhm.org.au

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John McCallum
Jennifer Lonergan

Victoria

Anne Ellison
Brendan Doherty

Queensland

Anthony Carter

Western Australia

Melissa Hilles

South Australia

Danny Broderick

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