

## **PHRAG Background**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to provide background material to assist the discussion regarding the goals, terms of reference, and development of a workplan for a reconstituted Public Health Research Advisory Group (PHRAG).

### **Background:**

PHRAG was originally constituted by the 1997 Board to provide a specific resource to deal with public health research issues in the absence of a research SIG. By 2000 the Group was not meeting regularly and had no tangible output. It was resurrected in 2001.

A brief history of each period (1997-2000, and 2001-2004) is at **Attachment A**.

In both periods PHRAG had considerable achievements and the Terms of Reference remained substantially unchanged. PHRAG has now not met for two years. If PHAA is to have a respected voice that has the potential to impact on public health research a new group must be convened.

In the past PHRAG consisted of a small group of senior public health fellows. The advantage of this has been that individual PHRAG members have been able to access people who have a significant influence in the bureaucracies and NHMRC. The disadvantage has been that these people also have extensive commitments and thus limited time to commit to PHRAG projects.

In order for this group to have an impact in public health research the Terms of Reference need to be reviewed and reconstructed. In order to do this the goals of the group need to be delineated.

In developing a new approach for PHAA to public health research issues PHRAG needs to consider:

- the critical issues for public health research in the next two years;
- where tangible outputs and achievements can be obtained for our members and others in public health (external and internal issue balance);
- what resources do we need to achieve outcomes (eg via collaboration with other groups, via SIGs and Branches, working parties etc);
- how best to communicate our achievements to members (workshop/presentation at the Annual Conference, revitalised web pages?);
- the membership of this group and its workplan.

## **Brief History of PHRAG**

### **1997 - 2000**

PHRAG was first instituted in 1997 under the Chair, Jeannette Ward. Over this period there were a variety of other Chairs including Stephen Leeder and Fran Baum. While the composition of the Group changed over time the most consistent members were Stephen Leeder, Bruce Armstrong, Sandy Gifford, Konrad Jamrozik, John McCallum, John Lowe, Mandy Thrift, Jeanette Ward, Vivian Lin.

### **Terms of Reference**

“The broad goals of the PHA PHRAG will be to promote and advocate public health research and development so that members and 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. Monitor public health research funding in Australia and contribute to efforts to increase funding in absolute terms. Encourage best practice in research through recognised awards, including liaison with and enhancement of PHERT, dissemination through the Journal and other strategies.
4. Encourage more effective links between public health policy, research and practice.
5. Support PHA representatives on Research Committee, Strategic Research Development Committee and other relevant committees and working parties of NHMRC.
6. Support the PHA representative on AIHW.
7. Liaise with the Public Health Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health & Family 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 a national level.”

### **Major achievements:**

- Undertook workshop on public health research needs in Australia (see Attachment A)
- Provided a submission to the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review.
- Provided a submission on the Review of the Public Health Education and Research Program (1998).
- Provided a submission to the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review (March 1999).
- Wrote Policy Statements on Public Health Research Funding, Improving National Health Statistics, NHMRC Research Funding and Tobacco Industry

Funds and a statement of ethical conduct involving humans for the Australian Health Ethics Committee.

### **2001 – 2004**

PHRAG was reconstituted under the leadership of Fran Baum in March 2001. The members of the Group were Jeanette Ward, Bruce Armstrong, Janet Hillier, Simon Chapman, John MacCallum, Judith Lumley, Vivian Lin, Brian Oldenburg and Mandy Thrift.

### **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 PHAA members.
2. Contribute to informed public and professional debate about public health research.
3. Encourage the monitoring of public health research funding in Australia 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 PHAA representation on research and other relevant groups and working parties of the NHMRC and advocate for increased representation.
7. Advocate for increased representation and the addition of new
8. Liaise with the Population Health Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health and 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.
9. Conduct ad hoc workshops, seminars and other activities to achieve its objectives.
10. Maintain a “watching brief” over developments in medical and public health research at national level.”

### **Major achievements:**

- Held a number of discussions with Warwick Anderson regarding the profile of public health funding within NHMRC.
- Lobbied NHMRC on public health issues including availability of scholarships for course work PhDs.
- Submission on national research priorities.
- Survey of Experience with NHMRC Grants process. (2003)
- Discussion Survey Report 2003 Annual Conference.
- Initiated links with ANAPHI.

- Request to NHMRC for funding for PHAA to hold a national seminar to examine the requirements of social science research in public health and health services research. (request rejected).

Last meeting March 2004