Public Health Association of Australia submission on Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The Public Health Association of Australia

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia working to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. It is the pre-eminent voice for the public’s health in Australia. The PHAA works to ensure that the public’s health is improved through sustained and determined efforts of the Board, the National Office, the State and Territory Branches, the Special Interest Groups and members.

The efforts of the PHAA are enhanced by our vision for a healthy Australia and by engaging with like-minded stakeholders in order to build coalitions of interest that influence public opinion, the media, political parties and governments.

Health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions that underpin people’s health. The health status of all people is impacted by the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic determinants of health. Specific focus on these determinants is necessary to reduce the unfair and unjust effects of conditions of living that cause poor health and disease. These determinants underpin the strategic direction of the Association.

All members of the Association are committed to better health outcomes based on these principles.

Vision for a healthy population

A healthy region, a healthy nation, healthy people: living in an equitable society underpinned by a well-functioning ecosystem and a healthy environment, improving and promoting health for all.

Mission for the Public Health Association of Australia

As the leading national peak body for public health representation and advocacy, to drive better health outcomes through increased knowledge, better access and equity, evidence informed policy and effective population-based practice in public health.

Preamble

PHAA welcomes the opportunity to provide input to Australia’s Voluntary National Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The reduction of social and health inequities should be an overarching goal of national policy and recognised as a key measure of our progress as a society. The Australian Government, in collaboration with the States/Territories, should outline a comprehensive national cross-government framework on promoting a healthy ecosystem and reducing social and health inequities. All public health activities and related government policy should be directed towards reducing social and health inequity nationally and, where possible, internationally.

The PHAA CEO, Michael Moore AM, is also the President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations. He has presented at a number of international forums on the relationship between the WFPHA’s Global Charter for the Public’s Health (The Charter) and the Sustainable Development Goals. The most recent presentations on this topic were in Taiwan in October 2017 and in Beijing in November 2017. For the full Charter, go to: http://www.wfpha.org/
PHAA Case Study 1 – PHAA Strategic Directions

Please provide a case study that outlines an initiative your organisation has implemented that contributes to the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The aims of the sustainable development goals are embedded within the Strategic Direction of the PHAA:

"Health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions that underpin people’s health. The health status of all people is impacted by the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic determinants of health. Specific focus on these determinants is necessary to reduce the unfair and unjust effects of conditions of living that cause poor health and disease. These determinants underpin the strategic direction of the Association."

The PHAA’s Strategic Direction is underpinned by the World Federation of Public Health Associations’ A Global Charter for the Public’s Health which was developed to be read in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Charter Framework builds strong Governance, Capacity, Information and Advocacy to support Protection, Prevention and Promotion of public health.

The PHAA implements its Strategic Direction through its 17 Special Interest Groups: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health; Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs; Child Health; Complementary Medicine; Ecology and Environment; Food and Nutrition; Health Promotion; Immunisation; Injury Prevention; International Health; Justice Health; Mental Health; One Health; Oral Health; Political Economy of Health; Primary Health Care; and Women’s Health.

The Special Interest Groups have developed over 70 policy position statements which underpin the advocacy work of the PHAA.

Please identify which SDG goals and targets apply to the case study

As reflected in the Health In All Policies principle, health interacts with all other policy areas. Similarly, the social, cultural and environmental determinants of health apply across a range of the SDG goals, in particular:

**Goal 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the Inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform) Bill 2017 arguing against the drug testing and penalisation of welfare recipients, as being a measure likely to worsen, rather than lessen, poverty among this population.

**Goal 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

For example, the PHAA is advocating for a National Nutrition Policy for Australia to improve nutrition and health. The PHAA CEO, Michael Moore AM, is a member of the board of Soils for Life which is chaired by former Governor-General Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd) bringing a health perspective to an organisation which promotes sustainable agriculture.

**Goal 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the consultation on the Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017, arguing that the proposed Commission should be population-wide rather than just children and families.
PHAA submission on Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

For example, the PHAA holds a biennial conference on Immunisation, promoting research on immunisation and the prevention and control of vaccine preventable diseases.

**Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**
For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the inquiry into improving the delivery of respectful relationships and sex education relevant to the use of technology in Queensland state schools. The submission argued that there are both challenges and opportunities provided by the increasing and constantly changing use of technology, and that there are many benefits to be gained from building young people’s capacity for respectful relationships and good digital citizenship.

For example, the PHAA has a number of policy positions relevant to this goal including: Women’s health and overseas aid programs; Gender and Health; Domestic and Family Violence; Abortion; and Contraception.

**Goal 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**
For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the inquiry into the rehabilitation of mining and resources projects as it relates to Commonwealth responsibilities, arguing that sites should be restored to a condition similar to before the mining or resource project began, ensuring no pollutants to contaminate land or waterways.

**Goal 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**
For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the inquiry into hydraulic fracturing in the Northern Territory, arguing that affordable, reliable and sustainable energy can be achieved through the use of renewable energy sources.

**Goal 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries**
For example, the PHAA has a number of policy positions relevant to this goal, including: Trade Agreements and Health; Refugee Health; and Maternal Mortality, Social Determinants of Health and Sustainable Development Goals in Asia; and One Health.

**Goal 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**
For example, the PHAA has a number of policy positions relevant to this goal, including: Ecologically Sustainable Diets; The Food System and Environmental Impacts; Global Warming, the Food System and Food Security; Palm Oil in Food; and Limits to Growth and Public Health.

**Goal 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**
For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the 2017 Climate Change Policy Review, arguing for stronger and urgent action on climate change.

**Goal 15 – Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**
For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the consultation on Better Mine Rehabilitation for Queensland arguing that full responsibility for rehabilitation of mining sites should be taken by mining companies, including the cost, and that excessive costs should not be a reason for not undertaking rehabilitation activities.
Goal 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

For example, the PHAA wrote a submission to the inquiry into incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples arguing for a greater focus on the underlying social issues leading to higher levels of incarceration, a justice re-investment approach and a justice target for the Closing the Gap targets.

PHAA Case Study 2 – Engaging to Strengthen Public Health in the Pacific

Please provide a case study that outlines an initiative your organisation has implemented that contributes to the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Engaging to Strengthen Public Health in the Pacific (ESPHP) – project proposal currently with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for consideration

Many Pacific Island countries have a high burden of disease, with poor health limiting advancement of other SDGs, like facilitating economic growth and reducing inequalities. Significant health challenges include a high burden of both non-communicable and communicable diseases, poor life expectancy, poor sexual and reproductive health and impacts of climate change including high annual losses from disasters, lack of access to safe drinking water, and increases in communicable and infectious diseases. Many public health measures would directly enhance not only Goal 3 but other SDGs. Increasing gender equity, reducing hunger, decreasing poverty and enhancing education are all well-accepted public health measures. However, many of the countries have small populations, and struggle to build capacity for improving public health due to a lack of economies of scale. In the Pacific, actions to improve health leverage existing cultural preferences for existing value sets prioritising health and community-based action and health. Public Health Associations have been established in over 100 countries. Within civil society, they draw together actors with diverse skills sets and perspectives, allowing for cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary solutions. Public Health Associations also act as a vital conduit between civil society and governments.

Over 4 years, the PHAA and the Council of Academic Public Health Institutions of Australasia (CAPHIA) would partner with Government, non-Government organisations and academic institutions in Pacific countries as well as regional organisations including the World Health Organization (WHO), The Pacific Community (SPC), the World Federation of Public Health Organisations (WFPHA), the Pacific Public Health Association (PPHA) and the Public Health Association of New Zealand. The project aims to provide institutional development, mentoring, technical expertise, public health interventions and placement opportunities for public health professionals in Pacific countries. Elements of the project would include:

- Stakeholder consultations
- Study tour for Pacific island civil society leaders to PHAA and CAPHIA in Canberra
- Partner projects with dual public health intervention and institutional development goals proposed by partner countries, with dual public health intervention and institutional development elements
- Technical expert volunteers from Australia assisting with partner projects
- Regional workshops to strengthen Pacific networks to increase economies of scale, build capacity and share learnings
- Mentoring from more developed PHAs from the region to newer and less developed PHAs to ensure sustainability
Please identify which SDG goals and targets apply to the case study

Through strengthening the capacity of public health associations and institutions in Pacific countries, the ESPHP project will be relevant to many of the SDGs. The project will initially address Goal 3, with others being addressed over time as public health gains momentum, and through partner initiated projects to address specific public health issues.

For examples of the ways in which public health associations are able to address SDG goals, please refer to PHAA case study number 1 – Strategic Directions.

General

Moving forward, how is your organisation looking to apply the guidance set out by the 2030 Agenda to your organisational planning? For example, is your organisation planning to incorporate the SDGs into annual planning and reporting or corporate practices.

As outlined in Case Study 1, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs are integral to the Strategic Directions of the PHAA, and consequently inform our workplans, practices and reporting.

Conclusion

The dynamics and importance of the social, economic, cultural and environmental determinants of health drive the work of the PHAA. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals represent an international, considered response to using these determinants to address health concerns. The PHAA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and the opportunity to contribute to Australia’s Voluntary National Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information or have any queries in relation to this submission.

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Public Health Association of Australia

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