Public Health Association of Australia submission on SA Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024

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Preamble

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.

The reduction of social and health inequities should be an over-arching goal of national policy and recognised as a key measure of our progress as a society. All public health activities and related government policy should be directed towards reducing social and health inequity nationally and, where possible, internationally.

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.
PHAA Response to the draft Strategy

Vision: What else should be considered in focusing on our state’s health priorities for the next five years? (250 words)

The Public Health Association of Australia supports the Strategy Visions, particularly those relating to illness prevention: preventing chronic disease, preventing communicable disease and preventing exacerbation of current conditions.

We are also happy with the proposed visions of improving health literacy, empowering individuals, families and communities to enhance their wellbeing, and creating healthier neighborhoods and communities.

In addition to the visions outlined in the Framework, the PHAA would also like to see visionary direction given on the following matters:

- reducing social and health inequities, including through better access to services
- better nutrition at a young age
- recognition of the role of climate and climate change in health
- recognition of the acute and urgent need to close the gaps in regard to health and wellbeing for Indigenous Australians
- evidence-informed policy and effective population-based practice
- increasing awareness and effectiveness of public health measures directed towards health promotion, community and public health, and disease prevention
- retaining the state’s position as a community health leader, but reducing our reliance on tertiary care and treatment.

Trusted: Do you feel that these deliverable actions sufficiently describe how SA Health will deliver on the TRUSTED theme? What would you add or change? (250 words)

Engagement and collaboration through relationship-building and accountability is strongly supported by the PHAA. We support the deliverable actions outlined in the framework. We would like to add the following for consideration:

- taking action to ensure South Australia becomes a community health leader through investment in intrinsic capacity of individuals and communities, for example developing the Wellbeing SA concept using a Health in all Policies approach, and collaboration across the government and non-government sectors
- empowering community sector groups to continue to provide assistance to some of the most vulnerable South Australians, by developing their capacity, knowledge and understanding of public health and health promotion evidence
- developing a strategic advisory committee to ensure future directions of all levels of healthcare are evidence-based and best practice
- developing a Children’s nutrition strategy to address the worrying number of children that are not meeting the recommended guidelines for daily serves of fruit and vegetables, with the aim to reduce the impacts on the modifiable risk factors of obesity on the chronic disease burden. (Ideally this would take place under the aegis of a new National Nutrition Strategy, which we urge the state government to support.)

We believe a focus on health promotion, preventative health and primary health will increase SA Health’s ability to be trusted to provide services, care, treatment, advice and guidance to all South Australians accessing the public health sector.
Targeted: Do you feel that these deliverable actions sufficiently describe how SA Health will deliver on the TARGETED theme? What would you add or change? (250 words)

PHAA supports the deliverable actions regarding using evidence and best practice to guide decisions. We believe that some of the possible indicator groups and outcomes for some of these deliverables could be more descriptive to allow for accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of each proposal, such as:

- further targeting and enhancing efforts in relation to health promotion, prevention, screening and early intervention
- more clearly describing the high value programs focused on risk factors relating to the development of chronic diseases and tailored to meet the needs of specific groups.
- clearer definition and refinement of the metrics used by SA Health to determine when a program or service is working would be beneficial.

These steps should mean that targeted services and programs will be more effective and based on evidence, and in turn that SA Health will increase its credibility as a service provider.

Tailored: Do you feel that these deliverable actions sufficiently describe how SA Health will deliver on the TAILORED theme? What would you add or change? (250 words)

PHAA supports the deliverables outlined, however would like to make the following observations:

- Exploring the use of digital and associated technologies should be encouraged, but not to the disadvantage of groups of people with limited computer literacy. The constraints on individuals and communities to adapt to new and emerging technology could be constrained by factors outside of the health system. Consideration should be given to improving computer and technological literacy, as well as health literacy to improve effectiveness. Caution is also warranted around the security and privacy impacts of the use of technology, the risks of which need to be mitigated and monitored by SA Health.
- When developing focus on responses to address the impact of domestic violence on all people, SA Health needs to consider the current constraints in the domestic abuse sector. It has been noted by members that there is an apparent lack of support options available for men experiencing domestic abuse, and some service providers are ill-prepared to manage this situation. PHAA recommends collaboration with other government departments, government funded support agencies and non-government organisations to effectively address all aspects of domestic abuse.

Timely: Do you feel that these deliverable actions sufficiently describe how SA Health will deliver on the TIMELY theme? What would you add or change? (250 words)

PHAA supports the deliverables outlined for timeliness of service provision, however the following should be considered for inclusion:

- a measurable, long term commitment to improving public health by considering collaborations under the Health in all Policies space
- targeting areas where a health promotion or preventative health service could support long term health benefits, for example through a Children’s nutrition strategy
- continuing to have a focus in reducing the need for tertiary hospital interventions, which is likely to have a reduction in the volume of assistances required, and could reduce the unnecessary hospitalisation days from the average length of stay by managing chronic disease.
PHAA notes that the proposed indicators for the Timely theme are all focused on patients within the hospital system. Additional metrics need developing to ensure that services and programs are effectively managing the demand for the system, and to show that preventative health programs and services are also being delivered in a timely manner.

**General comments (500 words)**

South Australia is leading the nation in the establishment of direction-setting public health legislation and strategic planning. It’s imperative that this policy foundation be sustained over the long term. PHAA commends recent and present SA Parliaments and Governments for their decisions so far. However, specific policy initiatives and funded programs are still vitally needed.

**Conclusion**

South Australia is leading the nation in the establishment of direction-setting public health legislation and strategic planning. It’s imperative that this policy foundation be sustained over the long term. PHAA commends recent and present SA Parliaments and Governments for their decisions so far. However, specific policy initiatives and funded programs are still vitally needed.

The PHAA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and the opportunity to contribute.

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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19 April 2019