

Advocacy in Action



Welcome from Professor Mike Daube, Director of PHAIWA

There could hardly have been a more appropriate time to launch a new Public Health Advocacy Institute than earlier this year. Governments have been changing, developing new policies and implementing new programs. There has been public debate about the role of health systems, prevention and the specific issues that engage us. New evidence has been emerging daily about the behaviours we seek to change, whether in individuals, in the community or in policy makers. Opponents of public health have also been active, seeking to prevent or undermine measures that we know will be in the public interest. As ever, from Governments and political parties at all levels there have been commitments of concern about prevention, but public health expenditure remains mired at 2% of the national expenditure on health.

Some of the problems we seek to address are local, some national - even global. Amidst all this, what can a small group based in Shenton Park hope to achieve?

- First, we can work as a coalition, in partnership with those seeking to promote the health of the community. There are many organisations with whom we can and should work, and we can encourage the development of further coalitions and partnerships.
- Second, we can identify priorities for action. We have, for example, identified the need for action in obesity, alcohol, child health, Indigenous health, injury, environment & health and public health expenditure.
- Third, we can identify advocacy targets. It is not enough simply to decide that some form

of action is needed. If we are to achieve change we must be very clear about the changes we and our partners wish to see in both short and long term, and then whom we should target in our efforts to achieve those changes.

- Fourth, we can both implement advocacy activities ourselves and help, encourage and train others to do the same, ideally in partnership with the PHAIWA and other organisations.
- Fifth, we can work to develop a broader understanding of the importance of prevention and the need for greater resources to be allocated to this perpetual Cinderella.

In the six months since its launch, the PHAIWA has made an encouraging start. We have worked towards all the objectives above, as well as being associated with an enormous range of activities both inside the PHAIWA and externally. We can claim to have been influential within WA and nationally and it is already clear that the media and key decision makers see the PHAIWA as a significant new force for action on prevention.

I am grateful to all those who have supported the PHAIWA thus far, and would like to thank the staff and those involved with our committees and working groups for their help during the first six months. This newsletter outlines some of the activities in the organisation. I hope that all who read it will wish to work with us. Above all, I hope that you will feel very free to suggest to us new and creative ways in which we can work towards our objectives - all ideas are welcome.



2008 State Election

On Friday August 29, only 8 days before the WA state election, PHAIWA held an Election Prevention Forum at Grace Vaughn House.

This forum was run jointly by WA branches of the Australian Health Promotion Association, the Public Health Association of Australia and the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Representatives from the four major West Australian political parties presented their health prevention policies and programs to an audience of interested health professionals.

This provided attendees with the opportunity to voice their concerns and have their questions about preventative health priorities answered directly by party members in the lead up to the election.

Despite being organised within the small time frame that the election was called, the turnout was fantastic, with not a spare seat to be seen in the lecture theatre. PHAIWA would like to thank all attendees for their input to this unique event.



L–R: Mike Daube (PHAIWA), Giz Watson (Greens WA), Jim McGinty (ALP), Cathryn Wood (Nationals) & Kim Hames (Liberal Party)



The WA Tobacco Document Searching Program (WATDSP)

The WA Tobacco Document Searching Program (WATDSP) is a three year Healthway funded project that involves searching documents from tobacco industry archives as they relate to Australia and more specifically Western Australia. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable premature death in the world and is the single largest cause of preventable mortality in Australia. This Program aims to reduce the prevalence of smoking and disease and deaths caused by smoking through a tobacco industry document searching program which incorporates both research activity and principles of advocacy. WATDSP works collaboratively with PHAIWA to guide effective advocacy outcomes for tobacco control. WATDSP has adopted advocacy tools and procedures as developed by PHAIWA.

During the first year of the Program, project staff networked with health professionals in tobacco control, public health and advocacy; searched tobacco industry documents; and developed effective document searching and management procedures. Project staff compiled a document searching manual that can be downloaded from our website. Project staff are currently working

on a number of journal papers and a monograph report as a result of extensive document searching. WATDSP presented project findings at the Population Health Congress in July and at the WA Cancer Council Conference in October this year.

The Program endeavours to build the capacity of others in tobacco document searching. WATDSP conducted an interactive document searching workshop in June of this year and will be delivering further seminars throughout 2009 and 2010. Our capacity building efforts extend to volunteers and practicum students interested in tobacco control and document searching. Two practicum students completed 100 hour placements with WATDSP and we currently have six volunteers registered with the Program.

Each month an industry document of interest is displayed on our website. The site is updated regularly with references to publications and upcoming workshops. To receive regular email updates regarding our project, please register your details by emailing Julia Stafford: j.stafford@curtin.edu.au.

For further information please visit our website: <http://healthsciences.curtin.edu.au/watdsp/>



Partner Feature: The Cancer Council WA

Old friends: The Cancer Council WA and Public Health Advocacy

It seems fitting that the Cancer Council WA becomes a founding partner for the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA in the same year the organisation celebrates its 50th anniversary.

In milestone years, histories are researched and sometimes slightly sanitised versions of the history are published. It is often the best stories of David and Goliath battles (that can remain “sensitive”) get edited out despite living on in organisational folklore.

Like the story of the former Executive Director who had his car window shot out at close range the day after denouncing a major WA institution over a product that is now clearly linked to causing a very specific form of lung cancer. Happily he wasn't in the car and that particular product is no longer on the market.

Whether it is fighting for smoke free bars and restaurants, restrictions on the solarium industry, seeking better funding for effective cancer screening programs or battling for better radiotherapy services for cancer patients, the Cancer Council has been in the advocacy game for a long time.

While that stirs the blood for some, it raises real issues for an organisation reliant on the donated dollar. As such, CEOs and Boards are rightly very sensitive to public opinion and therefore they do not invite controversy without a *very* good reason.

None the less we have to ‘challenge cancer’. And to do that, we have to challenge the things that contribute to cancer. That often means challenging convention. To do that we have to advocate. And to do that, investment of time, resources and skills is essential.

Getting people, governments and industry to change is never easy. It can mean costing government money, or promoting regulation that some industries suggest will mean they make less money, or worse still, pulling policy levers that change people’s daily habits of a lifetime. It can be uncomfortable stuff.

Whether alone, or in partnership with friends like PHAIWA, the Cancer Council probably has at least another 50 years of challenging cancer. And an essential tool we’ll continue to pull out of the kitbag to do that - is advocacy.

The existence of the PHAIWA means we have a partner in that pursuit able to respond quickly and effectively to advocacy opportunities that arise. And of course play a strategic role in planning the essential advocacy campaigns to tackle the cancer and public health challenges of the twenty first century.

Terry Slevin
Director, Education and Research
The Cancer Council WA



The Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA is funded by Healthway. PHAIWA also has six major partner organisations: The AMA WA, the Heart Foundation, the Cancer Council WA, Diabetes WA, the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, & Curtin University of Technology. We will feature articles from other partner organisations in future newsletters.





McDonalds 'mock-up' Advertisements

During the 2008 Olympic games, one of the most recognised advertising and marketing brands seen in Australian coverage was, ironically, McDonalds. The PHAIWA, in a move to bring attention to the misleading advertisements created by McDonalds, and to bring attention to the role of advertising to children in the fight against obesity, took action. In conjunction with the Cancer Council WA, the AMA, Diabetes WA and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, we launched a counter campaign with 'mock-up' versions of the McDonalds advertisements.

Olympic Gold Medallist in Hockey and Chair of the HealthWay Board, Jenn Morris, and Olympic Basketball Champion Luc Longley agreed to be featured in the PHAIWA advertisements. The ads featured the champions with fresh fruit and captioned with messages about healthy eating, for example, on the ad featuring Luc Longley he states:



'...the idea of eating fast food before or after an Olympic competition never entered my mind'.

The advertisements were featured on page 47 of the West Australian and in The Australian newspaper on Thursday August 14 2008. The morning that the ads appeared in the newspapers, PHAIWA, ran a press conference with the Cancer Council WA and Jenn Morris. On Friday August 15 the West Australian ran a page 3 article about the PHAIWA advertisements and the anti-obesity message that we were trying to achieve. We thank the partner organisations for their contributions in this project, we believe the press coverage and the advertisements to be a unique approach to the issue and made a big impact in the media in WA.

To see the full size advertisements and the press release, please visit the 'media' section at www.phaiwa.org.au or follow this [link](#)



PHAIWA Forums

Two Forums have been organised by the PHAIWA with input from partners. The initial Forum, held on 3 July 2008 focused on alcohol and was facilitated jointly with the Drug and Alcohol Office. It was attended by over 120 professionals. The Alcohol Policy Forum: Where Next? was officially opened by the Honorable Jim McGinty, then WA Minister for Health and offered the opportunity for consultation and discussion on the links between alcohol and public health issues. Keynotes included Professor Steve Allsop and Dr Tanya Chikritzhs.

Six workshop sessions designed to develop advocacy actions that could have maximum impact were integrated into the Forum. The Forum recommendations were used to develop a briefing paper to be submitted to the IGCD in July and were forwarded to a range of WA Ministers.

A recent meeting with DOA resulted in a plan of action on how best to follow through on these recommendations. Further information about this process will appear in the second edition of the PHAIWA newsletter.

An Obesity Forum was held at Curtin University (Bentley) on 21 August 2008. The Federal Minister for Health, the Honorable Nicola Roxon opened this Forum. Seven workshop sessions designed to develop advocacy actions around issues such as food marketing and regulation, designing out obesity, physical activity and food security were facilitated and generated a suite of recommendations for future action.

The Obesity Forum and Alcohol Policy Forum recommendations can be accessed on the PHAIWA website in the 'publications' section or by following this [link](#).



Who works at PHAIWA?

The six staff at the Public Health Advocacy Institute have been very busy since our inception in May and as more projects start we hope to have more people join our team. We will be holding some informal social functions to get to know other staff at our partner organisations in the near future, but to familiarise yourself in the meantime, here is a list of the staff you may come across at PHAIWA:

Professor Mike Daube, Director of PHAIWA and the WATDSP; Gail Stace, Administrative Officer; Dr Melissa Stoneham, Senior Research Fellow; Helen Mitchell, Research Fellow; Jodie Goodman, Project Officer; Leeana Wilson & Myra Robinson - Research Assistants. We also work very closely with the WA Tobacco Document Searching Project staff: Laura Bond, Research Associate & Julia Stafford & Jaimee Coombs, Research Assistants.



PHAIWA Staff are 'phit'

PHAIWA staff have had a tendency to practice what they preach when it comes to physical activity. This year, our staff have participated in a number of sporting events as a PHAIWA team including climbing Central Park Tower for the 'Step up for MS', and running in the Activ City to Surf, the Rottnest marathon and fun-run, and the Bankwest Rotary stair climb. We have also been developing Healthy Workplace plans so that we can set an example of a healthy working environment and recently purchased two bicycles to ride to and from meetings in the area.



WEBSITE

Our website went live in August. Become a registered user to receive news, updates and participate in online forums visit:

www.phaiwa.org.au

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Diary Note

Thursday December 4 2008

'Working with the Media Workshop'

Details are available on our website

[Click here to follow link](#)

or email info@phaiwa.org.au