



WEST AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC HEALTH 2021 ELECTION PLATFORM
PRIORITISING PUBLIC HEALTH

About PHAIWA

The Public Health Advocacy Institute of Western Australia (PHAIWA) at Curtin University aims to influence, build, promote, and support advocacy for public health priorities through innovation in education, applied research, engagement, and practice.

PHAIWA focuses on a number of areas of public health advocacy ranging from providing general advocacy advice and strategies for public health, implementing unique advocacy related research and innovative projects, building capacity within the public health workforce to allow more effective advocacy lobbying and communicating through our partners and the media.

Public health and the urgent need to prioritise prevention NOW

Failing to invest enough resources in core health priorities and systems puts lives, livelihoods and economies in jeopardy¹. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in the initial response to COVID-19 where, although Western Australian coped better than most, all jurisdictions were underprepared and under-resourced. Many of these issues are complex and require multi-focused approaches, but they are within reach. Public health is ultimately a political choice.

The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Learn more and take action². With the deadline for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals quickly approaching, the United Nations General Assembly has underscored that **the next 10 years must be the "decade of action"**.

This means advocating for funding to address gaps in health systems and health infrastructure, as well as providing support to the most vulnerable communities, groups and individuals. We have identified priority areas where investments and commitments can be made to ensure the health and wellbeing of all West Australians.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/photo-story/photo-story-detail/urgent-health-challenges-for-the-next-decade>

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Political Asks

1. Continue to prioritise and support public health over economic interests

- I. Continue to **prioritise public health focus when addressing COVID-19 pandemic**. This includes testing, tracing, quarantine, vaccination, protection through safe and sensible border restrictions, and ongoing recovery
- II. **Prioritise the prevention of avoidable chronic diseases** (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, COPD, some cancers, osteoporosis, mental health conditions, etc) and their precursors, particularly obesity
- III. Create **governance structures to encourage a 'whole of government'** response to complex public health problems and to reduce the influence of commercial vested interests
- IV. Support open, transparent and accountable government, with particular attention to political donations.

2. Reduce community exposure to unhealthy commodities (alcohol, tobacco, ultra-processed foods and gambling)

- I. Remove advertising of unhealthy commodities from public transport and other government-owned sites, including major sporting grounds
- II. Use fiscal measures to reduce consumption of unhealthy commodities (e.g., tobacco, alcohol and sugar sweetened beverages, ultra-processed food). **Implement a minimum unit floor price for alcohol** and regulate to prevent online access and home delivery of alcohol to minors.
- III. Maintain current restrictions on electronic gaming machines in WA.

3. Prioritise and promote food and nutrition security

- I. Urgently support, and where possible lead, the recommendations from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs' Food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities' recommendations, particularly 2, 5, 6, 10 and 11³. Lead the development of a **WA Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for First Nation Communities**.
- II. Support and contribute to the review of the **Australian Dietary Guidelines**, and associated materials and their ongoing implementation. Prioritise the development of a **WA Food and Nutrition Monitoring surveillance system**, including the **WA Food Stress Index**.
- III. Develop and implement evidence-based, culturally appropriate **Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Disaster Planning and Management**, and ongoing food relief.

4. Prioritise and promote mental health and wellbeing

- I. Increase investment in mental health prevention to 5% of the total Mental Health spend by **2025**
- II. Prioritise mental health wellbeing promotion by expanding and supporting the evidence-based and effective **Act Belong Commit** campaign.

5. Prioritise equity in health outcomes

- I. Develop, implementation and promote Reconciliation Action Plans in all government organisations and promote and support their development across all WA organisations

³ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Indigenous_Affairs/Foodpricing/Report

- II. Prioritise public health action to target WA living with poverty, particularly the 20% of children growing up in poverty. Develop and prioritise community-led public health interventions aimed at reducing obesity, food insecurity and mental health issues, including increased support for appropriate NGOs.

6. Prioritise and strengthen public health infrastructure

- I. Increase investment in health prevention to **at least 5% of the total health spend by 2025**
- II. Maintain Healthway activities with funding indexed to the current level and prioritise evidence-based health promotion interventions
- III. Invest in the public health and health promotion workforce to ensure an adequate number of suitably qualified and trained workforce, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- IV. Enforce the Public Health Act 2016 and support and fund the development and implementation of local government Public Health Plans

7. Prioritise engagement of the community in decision making for evidence informed public health

- I. Engage the community in systems change for public health outcomes using cutting edge evidence-based tools, particularly for obesity, food security and mental health wellbeing.
- II. Extend the successful WA Trachoma Project in remote Aboriginal communities (culturally led, evidence-informed housing maintenance environmental health intervention to address overcrowding, food storage, preparation or serving facilities)

8. Prioritise action on climate change, with a target of net zero emissions by 2050

- I. Reduce health sector emissions and contribute to designing and implementing adaptation plans and monitoring the health impacts of the changing climate.

We call on all political parties and candidates to commit to action in these priority areas to improve the public health of Western Australians.

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24 January 2021