

WB:ej

15 June 2017

To the Research Director

Via email: hcdsdfvpc@parliament.qld.gov.au

To whom it may concern

I am writing to you today in regards to your request for feedback on the *Healthy Futures Commission Bill 2017*.

AMA Queensland is the state's peak medical advocacy group, representing over 6000 medical practitioners across Queensland and throughout all levels of the health system. We value and believe in the work doctors do, and have previously advocated publicly on the importance of public policy impacting public health.

We support the measures included in the bill. The core concept behind the Healthy Futures Commission – a statutory body, which would have a whole-of-government focus in improving public health – is highly similar to the whole-of-government public health plan we advocated for in the first part of our *Health Vision*.

AMA Queensland believes that one of the key priorities of the Healthy Futures Commission (HFC) should be the development of a whole-of-government public health plan, which would help bring coordination to government policy development impacting public health issues.

Functions of the Commission

The Ministers introductory speech and explanatory notes make numerous mentions of how the HFC would help combat the obesity crisis facing Queensland, and we agree this should be an issue which the Commission gives a great deal of focus towards. However it should not be its only focus; there are a number of long standing public health crises which we believe could benefit from a whole of government approach to public health such as alcohol abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, mental health, vaccination and smoking cessation. Although AMA Queensland is confident Section 9 of the bill provides enough scope to ensure that the functions of the HFC are broader than the issue of obesity alone, we wish to put on record that the HFC should be looking at many other issues of public health concern, such as mental health, smoking, vaccinations and even black lung disease.

Board Appointment Lengths

Section 19(1) of the bill appoints individuals to the HFC board for a period of not more than four years.

AMA Queensland would suggest amending this section so as to allow for staggered or overlapping appointment lengths for board members so that they do not begin and end their appointments at the same time. Given that the work of the HFC will take some time to begin to have an effect, this would ensure that when board renewal happens, at least some of the members of the previous board will still be in place to help provide a form of continuity to its work.

Healthy Futures Fund

AMA Queensland supports the part of the bill which establishes the Healthy Futures Fund.

The bill states in Section 41(4) that the Commission must pay grants of “at least 55 percent of the total amount paid into the fund in that year.” The Minister’s media release of 21 May, 2017 states that the funding available to the Commission for payment of grants would be \$20 million over three years – this equates to \$6.66 million every financial year, which means that the HFC must only pay a minimum of just over \$3.3 million in funding every year. While this funding is an excellent start and will undoubtedly begin to effect change if spent and targeted wisely, the sheer number of public health issues which face the state may quickly overwhelm the fund. AMA Queensland would like to see a commitment to ongoing review of the HFC’s funding to ensure it can fulfil its purpose effectively right from the start.

In conclusion, AMA Queensland supports this bill and recommends it be passed by the Queensland Parliament. The Healthy Futures Commission is an incredible opportunity to transform the way Queensland develops and delivers public health policy in this State. AMA Queensland commends the Queensland Government on this initiative, and we look forward to working with the Government and the Commission to ensure it succeeds in its important work.

If you require further information or assistance in this matter, please contact Mr Leif Bremermann, Senior Policy Adviser, on 3872 2200.

Yours sincerely



Dr Bill Boyd
President
Australian Medical Association Queensland