

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-354

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMITTEE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

The website for the PCHC provides communiqués from meetings entitled "PCHC Meeting Outcomes" and then lists 4 meetings on 13 October 2009, 15 December 2009, 23 March 2010 and 27 July 2010.

- a) Are these the only 4 meetings that the PCHC has conducted?
- b) Is there any intention that further meetings of the Committee be held?
- c) Are minutes or other records of the meetings, other than the communiqués, kept for these meetings? Please provide copies of the agendas, the attendees, the minutes and whatever other records of each of these meetings exist.
- d) The final meeting of the PCHC on 27 July 2010 was a "face to face scoping workshop". It was attended by representative of the National Drug Research Institute, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre.
 - i) Who decided to convene this workshop?
 - ii) Who decided to invite these groups?
 - iii) Which other groups were invited, if any?
- e) Why did alcohol become a focus for the committee when it is not mentioned anywhere on the PCHC website or the documents establishing the PCHC such as the statement of expectations from the Parliamentary Secretary for Health or the letter of intent from the NHMRC?
- f) What were "the recommendations from that meeting" that are mentioned in the meeting communiqué?
- g) These recommendations were provided to the NHMRC for "further development". What action has occurred since that time? Please detail all grants, research funding, or other activities that have occurred pursuant to these recommendations?

Answer:

- a) The Prevention and Community Health Committee (PCHC) and/or its subgroups have met on the following dates:
- 13 October 2009,
 - 15 December 2009,
 - 22 January 2010 (Obesity subgroup),
 - 23 March 2010,
 - 27 July 2010,
 - 24 August 2010 (Opt-out Consent subgroup),
 - 5 November 2010,
 - 21 December 2010 (Obesity subgroup),
 - 1 February 2011,
 - 29 March 2011,
 - 18 August 2011, and
 - 8 December 2011.
- b) The PCHC is scheduled to meet on the following dates:
- 13 April 2012, and
 - 16 May 2012.
- c) The meeting agendas and records of meetings are at Attachment A.
- d)
- i) PCHC in consultation with the office of NHMRC (ONHMRC) decided to convene the workshop.
- ii) and iii)
The ONHMRC invited a number of representatives, in consultation with PCHC Members. These included: National Drug Research Institute, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, and University of Queensland.
- e) The ONHMRC determined that the priority action areas for PCHC should align with the report of the Preventative Health Taskforce, Australia: the healthiest country by 2020: National Preventative Health Strategy.
- f) The recommendations from the meeting held on 27 July 2010 are in the minutes at Attachment A.
- g) PCHC discussion at the workshop was synthesised to provide advice to the Council of National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in October 2010 on where NHMRC could make the most useful contribution to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm. PCHC members emphasised the importance of improving access to data as a precondition for the design and conduct of good quality intervention research. This included:

- the need for accurate and current data on alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm;
- the difficulties in accessing good quality data such as local alcohol sales data, police records and emergency department admissions;
- the lack of meaningful data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups who are a high risk population;
- the need to develop more appropriate, regular and relevant surveys of alcohol consumption. Current Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Health and Welfare data are likely to be substantial underestimations due to poor response rates; and
- the need for nationally consistent collection and coding of data.

Jurisdictional representatives of NHMRC Council were asked to discuss the support that could be provided to improve access to data for researchers. Council Members agreed at this meeting to facilitate access to relevant alcohol data for researchers.

At the November 2010 PCHC meeting, Members advised on holding a teleconference with Chief Health Officers, alcohol research experts, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Department of Health and Ageing to discuss access to data for alcohol interventions.

In February 2011, NHMRC held a teleconference with alcohol research experts and jurisdictional representatives. A recommendation from this teleconference was for NHMRC to host a workshop to give the jurisdictions an opportunity to showcase effective data management/access systems, including access to police data systems, such as the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

NHMRC held the Alcohol Data Workshop on 7 March 2012. The Workshop was attended by research experts in the alcohol field, as well as representatives from the health, crime and police sectors. The desired outcomes of the workshop were ideas for PCHC to identify access to, and consistent use of quality research data for intervention studies. PCHC will provide a report to the Council and Chief Executive Officer of NHMRC in June 2012 on recommended next steps.

No grants or research activities have been funded as a result of these deliberations as yet.