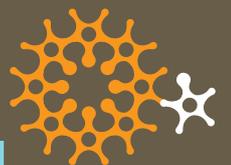


the voice of public healthcare



annual report  
2007/08



**ahha**

australian healthcare &  
hospitals association



# 2007-08 AGM Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association Annual Report

## Introduction

I am pleased to be presenting the annual President's report for the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association's 61st year.

The AHHA is the voice of public healthcare in Australia - the only Association independently representing the public and not-for-profit health sectors across all jurisdictions. The AHHA is a valuable source of information and advice on health policy and is influential in national policy and program development.

The AHHA has a critical role in upholding the public healthcare sector and always endeavours to meet high expectations for services and performance from members and stakeholders.

Our ongoing mission is to work with our members - clinicians, managers and academics - to utilise their knowledge and experience in developing innovative solutions and new standards for better healthcare. To do this, we facilitate national forums and networks to stimulate creative thinking and provide opportunities for participants to share experiences and to learn from peers. The result is a high-level cross-fertilization of ideas and the development of nationally consistent best-practice policies.

## AHHA Membership

In five jurisdictions - Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory - membership has been taken out by the state health/human services departments on behalf of all public sector services. Our membership is highly valued by these jurisdictions for our assistance in policy development and provision of high quality information.

Personal and associate members are steady. In addition, AHHA has welcomed a number of new Institutional members in the Community Sector.

A campaign to improve Institutional membership in NSW, Victoria and WA continues.

In line with the AHHA's strategic focus on providing more value to senior executives through exclusive events and opportunities, the AHHA is contributing material on a regular basis to Queensland Health's Executive Training Scheme in relation to our policy development program, events and publications. Contact with a similar scheme in South Australia is now being pursued. In addition, the AHHA's inaugural Executive Dinner is being held on 24 September 08.

## Policy and advocacy

The AHHA approached 2007-08 with a coordinated policy and advocacy plan. Given the new Labor Government's agenda for change, the organising principle for our 2008 policy and advocacy program is 'reform'. Topics were integrated with themes for our events and informed our media strategy, positioning the Association strongly in the minds of our members, key stakeholders and governments.

A very important finding in our 2007 membership survey was that 40.7% of respondents would participate in 'Communities of Interest' around key issues in the public health sector and another 41.8% said they may participate. A 'Community of Interest' was described as a "process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions and build innovations". This interest informed the development of our policy development methodology:

- formation of a 'core group' of stakeholders to develop a discussion paper;
- discussion and refinement of the paper by a larger group of stakeholders at a 'Think Tank';
- presentation of the paper to senior politicians and officials at a 'Roundtable';
- wide distribution (electronically and print) of the paper as a monograph to support ongoing advocacy and media strategies.

In another new feature of AHHA's policy development program, strategic partnerships have been formed with relevant organisations, to boost resources and relevancy. These organizations include the Australian Institute of Policy Studies, Mental Health Services Conference of Australia and New Zealand and Pricewaterhouse Coopers. By employing the mutual and complementary strengths of our organisations, opportunities arising from our policy development program are offered to a broader range of industry participants. We are also able to create a significant body of agreed evidence-based policies, involving action research where practicable. Advocacy for policy reform at senior political and departmental levels is also strengthened.

The AHHA met with the Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, soon after the election of the new Labor Government (18 December 2007 and 29 January 2008). As a result of these meetings, it was agreed that AHHA would undertake a comprehensive policy development exercise leading to a national policy Think Tank and Roundtable (21 April). Three 'core' groups were formed to develop practical options and strategies for the Government in the following areas:

- National Data and Benchmarking (chaired by Mr Graeme Houghton, (then) CEO, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital);
- Information Management (chaired by Dr Michael Legg, President, Health Informatics Society of Australia);
- Service Integration (chaired by Ms Mary Foley, (then) CEO, St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney).

Following further stakeholder input at a larger Policy Think Tank in May, monographs have been published in all three areas.

Other key topics of AHHA's 2007-08 policy focus have been:

- Australian Health Care Agreements: Think Tank with guest presenter Alan Bansemmer (March 2008);
- Oral / Dental Health: 'Policy Think Tank and Roundtable' (May 2008) resulting in publication of a monograph and ongoing advocacy with the Minister's office and DoHA;

- Mental Health Funding Methodologies: Policy Think Tank (August 2008) resulting in publication of a monograph. AHHA's partners were Mental Health Services Conference of Australia and New Zealand (TheMHS) and Pricewaterhouse Coopers;
- Workforce: Think Tank with guest presenter Professor Hal Swerissen (August 2008). AHHA's partner was Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

Ongoing development of these priorities and further advocacy will continue. Two more policies will be added to this body of work before the end of 2008: Community and Primary Health Care models and Governance.

The AHHA has also met with the Shadow Minister for Health, Joe Hockey (26 February). Discussion involved a general introduction to the AHHA and its policies.

## Media strategy

The AHHA aims to release an average of one media release per week (74 media releases in the 12 months to September 2008), being a mixture of pro-active and reactive topics. The releases are supplemented with opinion pieces and articles in mainstream and industry media. All are posted on the web-site and the most important are summarised in the quarterly Healthcare Brief. Wide coverage is achieved. Our Executive Director is interviewed regularly by radio and print reporters and was invited to speak on SBS Insight during election campaign.

The weekly e-HealthcareBrief is regarded very highly throughout the industry as judged from formal (ie survey) and informal comment.

## Election Surveys

AHHA posted two web-based surveys during the election campaign. Survey 1 focused on the Coalition policy and Survey 2 focused on Federal Labor Policy. In summary:

- a majority of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the Coalition policy for local hospital boards ( 56%). The proportion of people who are undecided about the policy remained steady at around 13%;
- as for the Labor policy of creating a National Health Reform Commission and taking Federal control of funding after 2009 if system improvements have not been achieved, almost three quarters (72.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the overall approach of the Labor policy. Similarly large proportions believed that the Labor policy and reform program would result in:
  - Improved coordination and integration throughout the healthcare system (66.7%)
  - An end to blame-shifting between governments (69.2%), and
  - Involvement of all states and territories in the reform process without Federal control of hospital funding (69.2%).

## Events

### Branch meetings

The AHHA aims to convene two major Branch meetings each year with guest presenters alternating between the Minister and the Departmental Head. Meetings in this period were:

#### Round #1

Tasmania: (Secretary) David Roberts (6 December 2007)

NSW: Prof Jeffrey Braithwaite (14 February 2008)

ACT: (Secretary) Mark Cormack (21 February 2008)

QLD: (Minister) Robertson (21 February 2008)

SA: (Secretary) Tony Sherbon (30 April 2008)

## Round #2

Victoria: (Minister) Daniel Andrews (3 July 2008)

ACT: (CEO) Mark Cormack (26 July 2008)

Tasmania: (Minister) Lara Giddings (2 September 2008)

Queensland: (CEO) Mick Reid (15 September)

South Australia: (Minister) John Hill (18 September 2008)

## 2008 Congress 25-26 September (Canberra)

The theme for the AHHA's National Congress 2008 (25-26 September) was '*Reform: the new era*' (<http://www.ahha2008congress.com.au/>). This theme allowed AHHA to create a comprehensive and stimulating program which aims to position AHHA's Congress as the 'leading forum' for discussing reforms being undertaken in member states/territories and from overseas, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Sub-themes focused on public health, prevention, indigenous health, climate change and the built environment.

## Community Health 24 September (Canberra)

The AHHA convened a meeting of the Victorian Community Health sector on 3 July. Discussion at the meeting centred on the definition and activities of community health. Our ultimate goal is to make community health a national priority through building a uniform policy base that takes differing state / territory structures into consideration. The AHHA used its policy paper on *Service Integration* as a starting point for a national community health campaign, coupled with the Community & Primary Health Care Policy Think Tank on Wednesday 24 September.

## Think Tank (Sydney)

The AHHA Health Think-Tank is now into its third year with Think Tanks #11-#13 being held during this period. The event continues to attract high level membership from the industry and academia.

TT number	Date	Guest presenters	Topic	Participants
TT #11	20/11/2007	Prof Chris Baggoley, Dr David Panter & Dr Martin Dooland & Dr Mike Stein	Safety & Quality, AHCA & Dental including Map of Medicine	17
TT #12	14/03/2008	Alan Bansemer	Australian Health Care Agreements	26
TT #13	4/07/2008	Prof Hal Swerissen	Workforce	30

The aims of the Think Tanks are to:

- offer intellectual enrichment and foster professional growth for individual members and organisations through sharing high level ideas and concepts;
- identify visionary concepts for the benefit of Australian policy development;
- provide the evidence to underpin policy development through action research and to generate options for practical health policies;
- implement a feedback process to ascertain the views of members;
- create an advocacy and media strategy aimed at promoting implementation of the policies at state and national levels.

## National Health Policy Roundtable 21 April (Canberra)

Three Discussion Papers (now policy - see above) and an Executive Summary were presented at the very successful AHHA National Health Policy Roundtable by the three Group Chairs.

The purpose of the papers was to develop practical policy options to inform the Government's reform agenda. The strength of the Roundtable was its membership of experts and leaders from the clinical and health management fields, who were able to base their recommendations on practical, on-the-ground experience in the health system.

After a morning of preparation, each paper was presented in the afternoon and time allowed for questions from the guests and discussion. About 50 people attended. The guests included Mick Reid, (then) Chief of staff from Nicola Roxon's office plus senior representatives from Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Health and Ageing, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, CSIRO and the Productivity Commission.

Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported on the event which appeared in The Age and SMH online (and also the Farm Weekly!).

The papers built on the outcomes of the 2020 Summit by recommending specific strategies to achieve many of the recommendations made by the Summit. They were further developed in concert with the Government and used to inform current health reform processes, including the work of the Health and Hospitals Commission and COAG Health and Ageing Working Group, and immediate negotiations for the next Australian Health Care Agreements.

### **AHHA Think Tank Exchange 2 May 2008 (Canberra)**

The Think Tank Exchange in Canberra reflected work done by the Roundtable Groups. Chairs of these groups presented at the Exchange and conducted the workshops to discuss and build on the draft papers. The program included:

- Terri-helen Gaynor – facilitator
- Graeme Houghton – Policy Topic #1 *National Data and Benchmarking*
- Michael Legg – Policy Topic #2 *Information Management*
- Mary Foley – Policy Topic #3 *Service Integration*
- Penny Albon (Director Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) - *Performance Indicators – Role of AIHW*

## **Publications and Services**

AHHA remains a source of useful, relevant, timely and high quality information about health policies generally and the public healthcare sector specifically, providing our members with a comprehensive range of information and support services, including:

- *Australian Health Review (AHR)*: we continue to be proud of the performance of our prestigious peer-reviewed journal, which is gaining in national and international recognition. Under the skilled editorship of Dr Sandra Leggat, the Journal is well-produced with a consistently high level of excellent articles. Planning has begun to position more strategically the Journal in the e-publishing market;
- *Healthcare Brief*: our quarterly newsletter is being produced with interesting news and articles about AHHA's activities and the sector;
- *E-HealthCare Brief*: our weekly news summary, the most widely read of our regular services;
- *Website information and services*: including Just Health News, Events and Jobs and the Australian Health Review. Our current statistics indicate over 1000 visitors to our website each day with many being directed to specific pages from our electronic news services. A significant number of those visits are from web crawler services such as MSN, Yahoo and Google, indicating that these services have identified a rich source of information but there may be room for improvement in our communications to members and potential members about our valuable web services.

## Submissions

As usual, AHHA has provided input to all relevant national inquiries and Government activities. This year they have included:

### October 2007-August 2008

- The AHHA has submitted four responses to Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC):
  - ACSQHC Consultation Paper: An Alternative Model for Safety and Quality Accreditation of Health Care (October 2007);
  - Standard Patient Identification Band (March 2008);
  - Patient Charter of Rights (July 2008); and
  - Consumer Engagement Strategy for the Commission (August 2008).

### December 2007

The AHHA submitted a proposal to the Commonwealth Treasurer in relation to the 2008-09 Federal Budget. The AHHA pre- and post-budget advocacy was successful, with the announcement of the \$10 billion Health and Hospitals Fund to focus on updating infrastructure, technology and research capacity (particularly in partnership between hospitals and universities). This was included in our 2008/09 budget submission.

The AHHA was also requested to provide comment on the pre-budget announcement regarding the increase in income threshold for the Medicare Levy Surcharge. Based on advice from key AHHA stakeholders and advisers, we took the position that the impact is unlikely to be the disaster predicted by some other organisations, but that the situation should be monitored to evaluate the possible impact on public hospitals. We stated that any savings made by the Government from reduced outlay in the PHI rebate should be directly invested in public hospitals where the increased demand may appear (on top of other existing commitments, eg. the elective surgery funds). The AHHA has maintained its position during the campaign leading to the introduction of the legislation in the Senate.

### May 2008

The AHHA was invited to appear at a public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing Inquiry into Obesity in Australia. The Committee sought evidence through the AHHA of the impact of obesity on acute services in particular. Appearing on behalf of the AHHA were Associate Professor Katherine Samaras, Senior Specialist in Endocrinology, St Vincent's Hospital (Sydney) and Ms Vanessa Brenninger, Senior Clinical Dietician, Royal North Shore Hospital (Sydney). The evidence provided by Assoc Prof Samaras and Ms Brenninger was very well received by the Committee, and covered in a dedicated article in *The Australian* (May).

### May and July 2008

The AHHA submitted a comprehensive body of work to the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (May 2008) and supported this with a detailed presentation at a hearing before several Commissioners (July 2008). The expertise of our delegation was critical in achieving a professional and broad ranging presentation. The capacity of the AHHA to bring together senior officials/experts to present detailed policies across such a wide range of policies is unparalleled among NGOs.

## Tenders

In January, AHHA submitted tenders to the ACSQHC: ACSQHC Panel RFT 191-0708: Proposal to Provide Specialist Contracting Services to the Office of the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care - specifically: Panel 3: Facilitator and program support; Panel 5: Health issues and literature review; and Panel 10: Research brokerage.

Subsequently, the AHHA was advised (received 23 April) that the Assessment Panel has recommended our proposal for the 'Provision of Health Issues and Literature review Services'. The Deed is effective from the date of signing until 31 December 2010 (unless terminated earlier). Fees will be calculated at a fixed hourly rate of \$250.00; or a fixed daily rate of \$2000.00; or a fixed weekly rate of \$9090.91 (excluding GST).

## Speeches

Prue Power has given the following presentations during the period.

### **August 2007:**

Australian Financial Review Skilling Australia Summit - Genuine skills shortage or maldistribution of labour?

Australian Health Summit - Should the funding of medical research remain primarily a public responsibility?

### **February 2008:**

Australian Centre for Economic Research in Health Policy Forum - Hospital financing – viewpoints

Australian Financial Review Annual Health Congress [panel] - Crossing the Rubicon – the State/Federal administrative divide

### **March 2008**

Australian Health Care Reform Alliance Workshop on AHCAs - Improving the Australian Health Care Agreements

### **September 2008**

Australian Institute of Health Policy Studies Forum - National Citizen Engagement

## Linkages with other organisations

National Council supports establishing closer links with other organisations in the health sector.

In addition to the Australian Institute of Health Policy Studies, the AHHA maintains strong networking links, both formally and informally, with a wide range of industry personnel and organisations. Our historical affiliation with the Victorian Healthcare Association has been rekindled over the last 12 months and our co-location with the Women's and Children's Hospitals Australasia facilitates opportunities for informal and formal liaison.

In addition, AHHA belongs to three industry groupings:

- Australian HealthCare Reform Alliance: The AHCR has membership of over 40 health-related organisations;
- Australian Aged Care Alliance;
- National Community and Primary Health Care Network.

Linkages also occur via:

- *AHHA Think Tank*: organisations are invited to send representatives to the AHHA Think Tanks.
- *AHR*: The arrangement with the Case Management Society of Australia is successful.

## Sponsorship

Sponsorship is also a strong source of revenue.

- HESTA has recommitted for 2008 (calendar year) including Congress sponsorship (cocktail party);

- Map of Medicine committed for 2008 (calendar year) including Congress sponsorship;
- Tress Cox Lawyers provides in-kind support, particularly in relation to the Think Tank;
- DLA Phillips Fox provides in-kind support, particularly in relation to policy development and submissions on legal matters and/or legislation;
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers provides in-kind support, particularly in relation to policy development;
- Setform has recommitted to publish posters in conjunction with AHHA for 2009-11;
- Baxter Healthcare has renewed its sponsorship of the Congress (dinner);
- Phillips is sponsoring memory sticks for policy distribution;
- Telstra, Intel and DLA Phillips Fox are sponsoring Congress sessions.

## **AHHA National Secretariat**

AHHA's National Secretariat, located in Canberra, comprises a small team performing all the activities of a peak body. Looking after membership interests is a high priority for our staff. I wish to acknowledge their work and thank them for their commitment to our organisation.

## **AHHA National Council and Representatives**

I also wish to thank all members who have been involved in our policy development agenda and who have represented AHHA on various committees and inquiries. We are grateful to them for sharing their expertise with us and assisting AHHA to provide such a high quality of input.

I especially thank our National Councillors for their dedication to our Association and for being available to support the organisation throughout the year. In particular, I wish to thank our Board members who have given dedicated support to the Association over the past 12 months. They have been Immediate Past-President, Dr Stephen Christley; Vice-Presidents, Dr Paul Scown and Dr Patrick Bolton; and Treasurer, Mr Paul Monaghan.

To those Board members and Councillors who are not returning, I know that I speak for all of us in thanking you for your commitment to our important organisation. I trust that you will continue to maintain an involvement in the life and activities of this important Association.

## **Conclusion**

Our Association is only as strong as its members.

I thank you all for ensuring we have been able to continue our valuable work over the year.



Dr David Panter  
President



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