

National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission

Submission from the Oxford Health Alliance Asia-Pacific Centre

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The Oxford Health Alliance Asia-Pacific Centre urges the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to adopt the Sydney Resolution and address the common causes and solutions for sustainability and health in its recommendations

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THE SYDNEY RESOLUTION

Calls for Healthy People in Healthy Places on a Healthy Planet

The Sydney Resolution makes explicit the fundamental link between sustainability and health, and is an important input for consideration by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC) throughout its work in shaping Australia's future health system. The Resolution directly reflects ten of the fifteen NHHRC principles: people and family centred, equity, shared responsibility, strengthening prevention and wellness, comprehensive, providing for future generations, recognise broader environmental influences which shape our health, taking the long term view, public voice and a culture of reflective improvement and innovation.

The Sydney Resolution was a key outcome of the 2008 Oxford Health Alliance (OxHA) Sydney Summit, *'Building a Healthy Future: Chronic Disease and Our Environment'* which was predicated on drawing attention to and exploring the common causes and potential solutions to epidemic chronic diseases. The Sydney Resolution makes a global call for urgent action across five vital areas:

- Healthy places
- Healthy food
- Healthy business
- Healthy public policy
- Healthy societies.

To date, the Resolution has been formally adopted by Diabetes Australia, Diabetes New Zealand, the World Lung Foundation, the World Heart Federation, the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, the Australian Health Promotion Association, and is being used informally by many others.

The Australian health system plays a fundamental role in Australian society – not only in the provision of primary care and primary health care, but as a workplace, an employer, a builder and developer, and as a role model for healthy living. OxHA Asia Pacific Centre urges the NHHRC to adopt the Sydney Resolution, and address the common causes and solutions for sustainability and health in its recommendations.

Healthy Places

Australia's health system should provide supportive physical environments for health and minimise its impact on the environment. Specific actions include, but are not limited to:

- Adopt a 'green building' approach to all new developments and incorporate in existing infrastructure where possible – an energy efficient, water-wise, re-use, recycle ethos
- Conduct health, social and environmental impact assessments on all infrastructure proposals and put measures in place to enhance the positive and minimise the negative impact of new infrastructure
- Create spaces that foster social interaction, not only for the systems constituents but the broader community. Health system infrastructure is a community asset and should be suitably integrated into the urban landscape in which it is located. Every effort must be made to ensure that it does not impinge on or detract from its surroundings. The design of facilities, both internally and externally, must be consistent with community values and promote communication, comfort and safety.
- Measure, reduce and monitor the carbon footprint of the health system
- Reduce reliance on individual vehicles throughout the health system through the provision of incentives and enablers such as:
 - easy access to public transport and free internal mass transport (buses)
 - unobstructed walkways and cycle paths within health facility grounds
 - facilities to park bicycles
- Continue to support a smoke-free environment – expand smoke-free areas, eliminate access to tobacco products and provide treatment and support for those wanting to live smoke-free

Healthy Food

Australia's health system should ensure that healthy and nutritious food is affordable and available to all people who come into contact with it, such as patients, staff and visitors. In purchasing, providing or commissioning the provision of food, the health system should favour options that consider and mitigate the negative impact on the environment of current food production, transportation and storage practices. Specific actions include, but are not limited to:

- Consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines:
 - review the quality of food provided to inpatients and available through all health facility food outlets and ensure a balanced range of options that favour nutritious foods and limit foods that are high in fat, salt and added sugar
 - replace vending machines or their unhealthy contents with healthy food
 - develop and implement strict criteria for all external food contractors, producers and retailers supplying or operating within health facilities; criteria should address such things as food quality, portion size, variety, choice and nutrient value
- When sourcing foodstuffs, consideration should be given to production, transport and storage, and the purchase of local produce should be prioritised to reduce the negative environmental impacts - optimising freshness and the nutritional value of food provided within health facilities
- Establish and work with a federal level committee of food industry representatives tasked with improving food quality nationally

Healthy Business

Australia's health system should adopt sustainable and healthy business practices and be a role model to other government and industry sectors. Specific actions include, but are not limited to:

- Implement workplace well-being programs that address areas such as nutrition, physical activity, smoking, stress, sleep disorders, relationships and regular health checks
- Foster a healthy work-life balance through fair rostering and limiting excessive overtime
- Encourage and support staff to become involved in community initiatives that give a sense of 'giving back' such as a local schools, assisting at a soup kitchen and encouraging blood donation
- Strengthen and expand the capabilities of the health workforce to act on the social determinants of health through training and education
- Regularly appraise business policies, practices and governance to ensure that available resources are used effectively

Healthy Public Policy

Not only should Australia's health system ensure its own policies are fair and just, but it also has a responsibility to advocate for health across other sectors. Specific actions include, but are not limited to:

- Advocate for health to be embedded in policy considerations across all sectors and at all levels
- Participate, facilitate and make an active contribution to policy making outside of the health sector (such as education, transport, urban planning, industry) to influence and shape policy and practices that consider the health, social and environmental impacts and their distribution
- Lobby for positioning responsibility for action on health at the highest level of government
- Implement a system of truly universal health care that is based on the principles of equity, disease prevention and health promotion
- Increase the capacity of the system to effectively join up with other non-health social services (such as employment and education) for ease of referral and stronger connections across the community

Healthy Societies

By addressing equity and socio-economic disadvantage, the Australian health system can help to foster a healthy society. Specific actions include, but are not limited to:

- Address the social determinants of health and equity in all health system policies and programs
- Strive to be an exemplary role model for sustainability and health in the community, and a leader for other government and business sectors by making consideration of sustainability and health the norm
- Address gender biases in governance structures and ensure gender balance at the senior executive level and other governance structures such as boards and ministries.
- Support families through environment and employment conditions that foster parents' ability to care for their children, ensuring equity from the start
- Prioritise the allocation of sufficient resources (both human and financial) to primary prevention, including health promotion strategies such as health education and social marketing.

The Sydney Resolution

February 2008

Healthy People in Healthy Places on a Healthy Planet

The way we live is making people sick. It is also making our planet sick. It is not sustainable. We can do better.

The world is now facing the most serious challenges to human health. The magnitude and complexity of these challenges require the broadest alliance and partnership of stakeholder groups to confront this growing and urgent problem. Four preventable chronic diseases – heart disease/stroke, diabetes, chronic lung disease and cancer – account for 50% of the world's deaths. Their underlying causes are tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor diet.

These preventable chronic diseases are at epidemic proportions. They are increasingly affecting younger people and cause physical disability, depression, and early death. There are immense costs to society in lost productivity and increased use of health services. The epidemic threatens economic stability in developed and developing countries alike. Families striving to escape the poverty trap are pushed back into disadvantage and despair. The problem is similar to that of climate change in that it affects the whole world, is the result of our way of living and, crucially, can be reversed.

Urgent action is needed. There is a clear way forward. The four major chronic diseases can largely be prevented, but there is no simple or quick solution. To achieve real change, it is necessary to bring together dedicated stakeholders from all parts of society. The development of how we live as societies, share opportunities, interact with the natural environment and how we design our cities, transport systems, food systems, work places and housing will fundamentally determine future patterns of health and disease. We need health services focussed on prevention as well as cures and we need our world free of tobacco. We must fundamentally reshape our social and physical environments so that they are aligned with eradicating this epidemic of chronic disease.

The call to action

We call on the United Nations' agencies, governments, corporations and businesses, donor agencies, professionals, consumers, non-government organisations and employee unions, civil society and individuals to collaborate in taking urgent action to halt the devastating global impact of chronic diseases. We know that change is possible for individuals and families, communities and nations and that the change will promote economic and environmental sustainability. We need:

- **Healthy places – designing towns, cities and rural areas, which are smoke-free, and where it is easy to walk, cycle and play, with unpolluted open spaces and safe local areas that foster social interaction.**
- **Healthy food – making healthy food affordable, and available to all.**
- **Healthy business – engaging business in the agendas promoting healthy people, healthy places, healthy planet and making good health good business.**
- **Healthy public policy – formulating comprehensive, innovative and 'joined-up' legislation and social and economic policies that promote health.**
- **Healthy societies – addressing equity and socio-economic disadvantage.**

Oxford Health Alliance, 27 February 2008

See: www.oxha.org, www.3four50.com and Grand Challenges in chronic non-communicable disease. Nature 2007 450; 494-496

ABOUT THE OXFORD HEALTH ALLIANCE (www.oxha.org)

Confronting the Epidemic of Chronic Disease

The Oxford Health Alliance (OxHA) is an international think-and-action tank of diverse stakeholders, dedicated to confronting the epidemic of chronic disease through innovative action. Formed in 2003 as a partnership between Oxford University and Novo Nordisk Denmark, OxHA seeks to influence the policies and practices of government, business and the broader community to modify the social and physical environment and protect and promote health. OxHA differs from traditional health NGOs in that it is issue-specific rather than disease-specific; it operates at a macro-economic and macro-political approach to influence and accelerate changes aimed at making our physical, social and work environments more conducive to health.

The OxHA Board, chaired by Professor Sir John Bell, has identified six central themes to guide the work of the Alliance.



The economic argument for prevention

The costs of chronic disease are already vast, and without urgent action these costs will continue to increase.



Prevention in the workplace

Chronic disease risk reduction in the workplace can have a major impact on the health of employees and their families while demonstrating social responsibility and improving productivity.



Youth, children and future health

The insights and enthusiasm of young people can change perceptions and lifestyles of future generations.



Environmental design for prevention

Designers, architects and urban planners can assist in creating environments in which healthy choices are embedded in our streetscapes, transport and buildings.



Industry's role in prevention

Good business policies and practices can enhance the health impact of products and services and have far-reaching effects on the health of individuals and communities.



Law + health

Exploring the relatively untapped potential of the law to modify average population behaviour for health gain.

OxHA Asia-Pacific Centre was established in 2005, and is based at the Australian Health Policy Institute, University of Sydney.