

9 October 2020

South Australian Productivity Commission
GPO Box 2343,
ADELAIDE SA 5001



Via email: sapc@sa.gov.au

Dear Commissioners,

Submission in response to the draft report into Health and Medical Research in South Australia

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia working to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. It is the pre-eminent voice for the public's health in Australia, and seeks to drive better health outcomes through increased knowledge, better access and equity, evidence informed policy and effective population-based practice in public health. PHAA has clear policies on health promotion and illness prevention, including the Health Promotion and Illness Prevention Policy Position Statement (<https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/2880>), with the intention of improved population health.

We write further to the release of the draft report and subsequent to our original submission, made during the consultation period earlier in 2020. We acknowledge that our recommendation for evaluation frameworks has been incorporated in the draft report, with the importance of evaluation for all research identified as a recurrent theme in the consultation process. We note that process evaluation has not been explicitly mentioned and we suggest that this also be included. As stated in our previous submission, process evaluation is often overlooked in research planning yet is integral in demonstrating a causal link between observed outcomes and intervention theory. Such approaches should be included in health research impact assessment frameworks, as per information request 4.3.

The PHAA is encouraged by the inclusion in the draft report of our position that health and medical research in South Australia should shift from the current focus on clinical trials and laboratory-based research to incorporate health protection, health promotion, and prevention approaches. We are, however, concerned that despite this, of the 133 references to public health in the draft report, the majority appear to relate to the system and clinical aspects of public health, rather than that of public health promotion, protection and prevention approaches. The current COVID-19 pandemic highlights the critical need for public health approaches.

As stated in the PHAA policy position statement¹, health promotion and illness prevention action have significant positive impacts on population health, and evidence-based health promotion and illness prevention initiatives result in major cost-savings and deliver public return on investment for governments

and the community, including hospital avoidance. To achieve these outcomes, we reiterate that the de-investment in prevention research seen in this state in recent years must be reversed. The PHAA believes that direction of more funding toward the public health research component of health and medical research should be a key recommendation of the Productivity Commission's report.

The PHAA looks forward to the outcomes of the current consultation process.

Yours sincerely



Terry Slevin
Chief Executive Officer
Public Health Association of Australia



Dr Jacqueline Bowden
PHAA Branch President
South Australia

¹Williams, C & Herriot, M 2018, *PHAA Policy Position Statement on Health Promotion and Illness Prevention*, Public Health Association of Australia, <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/2880>.