



CATHOLIC HEALTH

Australia

30 March 2012

Senator Moore (*Chair*), Senator Siewert (*Deputy Chair*)
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Senators

RE: Request for the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs to establish an inquiry into the Social Determinants of Health

We the undersigned write to you, as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs, to seek the establishment of an inquiry into the social determinants of health.

Last year Senator Moore, you launched the publication *Determining the Future: A Fair Go and Health For All* (edited by Martin Laverty and Liz Callaghan) at Parliament House. This publication brought together a range of unique essays on the social determinants of health from some of Australia's leading health and social policy experts – medical professionals, academics, opinion leaders, thinkers and writers. At the time Martin Laverty, CEO Catholic Health Australia approached you to flag that a number of authors would be writing to you to request the establishment of an inquiry in order to raise the profile of social determinants of health within the political sphere.

In terms of context, as you are aware in 2008 the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health released its report *Closing the Gap within a Generation*. The Commission recommended member countries adopt social determinants action plans to address persistent health inequalities within in nations, and between nations, that are a consequence of socio economic disadvantage.

In response to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health recommendations, the European Union established an Expert Group on Social Determinants of Health and health inequalities. It has been charged with driving European Union wide programs to implement WHO recommendations, and to encourage member state action on the social determinants of health. There are encouraging results that are emerging from some countries, particularly Norway.



In addition Sir Michael Marmot who previously chaired the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, is currently chairing the review of social determinants and the health divide in the WHO European region. The final report from the review will be published in September, 2012. The conclusions, recommendations, and policy implications of the European review will have relevance beyond Europe, although it is suggested that Europe is ready to respond to the recommendations of the review through the development of the new WHO European policy for health, *Health 2020*, which will focus on the social determinants of health. *Health 2020* will be presented for approval to the 53 Member States in the European Region at the 62nd session of the Regional Committee this year.

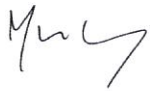
Finally, the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October, 2011 and following this conference the Executive Board of the WHO endorsed the Rio Political declaration on Social Determinants of Health (see attachment) which urged member states to develop and support policies, strategies and programmes and action plans that address social determinants of health, with clearly defined goals, program activities and accountability mechanisms and with resources for their implementation.

It is the view of many of the contributors of *Determining the Future: A Fair Go & Health for All* that there is increasing momentum gathering internationally for action, and Australia is lagging well behind this momentum. The European review, led by Sir Michael, the momentum created by *Health 2020* and the outcome of the world conference on the social determinants of health ought to propel the Australian government into beginning to take this issue seriously in order to create health equity for future Australians.

The release of *Determining the Future: A Fair Go & Health for All* last year does some of the important work of localising the issue for policy makers, and demonstrating that this isn't an issue that's just being thought about in Europe.

This is why we are calling for a senate inquiry into the social determinants of health and will be seeking a commitment from the Gillard Government to adopt the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health framework.

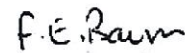
Yours Sincerely



Martin Laverty
CEO Catholic Health Australia



Fr Frank Brennan
Professor of Law
Public Policy Institute
Australian Catholic University



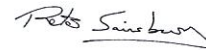
Professor Fran Baum
Director – SA Community Health
Research Unit (SACHRU) &
Southgate Institute for Health
Society and Equity



Dr Steve Hambleton
President
Australian Medical Association



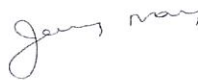
Dr John Falzon
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society
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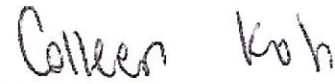
**Associate Professor Peter
Sainsbury**
Director, Population Health
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Gloria Larman
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Dr Jenny May
Past Chair, National Rural Health
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Colleen Koh
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Dr Tim Woodruff
Vice President
Doctors Reform Society



Dr Matt Fisher
Research Officer, Southgate
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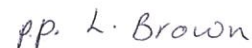
Professor Leonie Segal
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Economics and Policy, School of
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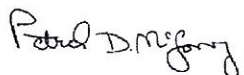
Dr David Cooper
Senior Policy Officer
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Dr Binod Nepal
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National Centre for Social and
Economic Modelling



Professor Laurie Brown
Research Director
National Centre for Social and
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Professor Patrick McGorry
Professor of Youth Mental Health,
University of Melbourne. Executive
Director, Orygen Youth Health



Liz Callaghan
Director Strategic Policy
Catholic Health Australia

Draft Terms of Reference for proposed senate inquiry

Context:

In 2008 the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health released its report *Closing the Gap within a Generation*. The Commission recommended member countries adopt social determinants action plans to address persistent health inequalities within nations, and between nations, that are a consequence of socio economic disadvantage. Following the Commission's report Sir Michael Marmot, Chair of the Commission, led a yearlong independent review into health inequalities in England. The review proposed the most effective evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities in England from 2010.

The World Conference on Social Determinants of Health was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October, 2011 and following this conference the Executive Board of the WHO endorsed the Rio Political declaration on Social Determinants of Health (see attachment) which urges member states to develop and support policies, strategies and programmes and action plans that address social determinants of health, with clearly defined goals, activities and accountability mechanisms and with resources for their implementation.

In light of increasing momentum gathering internationally for action, and the fact that Australia appears to be lagging behind in this health policy area, CHA call for a comprehensive inquiry into the social determinants of health in Australia. The **Terms of Reference** for that inquiry are proposed as follows:

- a. Identify the extent, adequacy and funding for programs and services, that address the social determinants of health;
- b. Identify the capability of existing health and community services to meet the needs of populations who are adversely affected by the social determinants of health;
- c. Identify the extent to which health and community service providers need to be educated about the social determinants of health;
- d. Identify ways of increasing the broader community's interest in the social determinants of health; and
- e. Identify the extent to which experience and expertise in the social determinants of health is appropriately represented on national health agencies, especially the recently established National Preventative Health Agency.
- f. Identify the current impact of inequalities in the major social determinants of health on the health of the community.
- g. Review and summarise current evidence on social determinants of health in Australia, including evidence describing social gradients in health and other health inequalities.
- h. Identify the level of Commonwealth and other funding for research addressing social determinants of health;
- i. Assess the potential for change in Commonwealth policies in all portfolios, and synergies between policies, to promote good health, reduce adverse effects of social determinants of health, and reduce health inequalities.

In addition CHA call for:

- The Social Inclusion Board to develop a cabinet process that can examine the impact of social determinants on health within all policies and cabinet proposals, in a similar vein to the SA Government "Health in All Policies (HiAP)" cabinet process.
- Local Hospital Networks and Medicare Locals must be required to consider the existing social determinants of health within their own catchment areas and to respond to these issues through service planning and community development activities.
- The National Health Preventative Agency and the Social Inclusion Board must develop a specific interface in order to work together.

Outcome of the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 2011),¹

RECOMMENDS to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 19–21 October 2011);

Reiterating our determination to take action on social determinants of health as collectively agreed by the World Health Assembly and reflected in resolution WHA62.14 on reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health, which notes the three overarching recommendations of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health: to improve daily living conditions; to tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources; and to measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action;

Recognizing the need to do more to accelerate progress in addressing the unequal distribution of health resources as well as conditions damaging to health at all levels;

Recognizing also the need to safeguard health of the populations regardless of global economic downturns;

Further acknowledging that health equity is a shared goal and responsibility and requires the engagement of all sectors of government, all segments of society, and all members of the international community, in “all-for-equity” and “health-for-all” global actions;

Recognizing the benefits of universal health coverage in enhancing health equity and reducing impoverishment;

¹ Document EB130/I5.

Reaffirming the political will to make health equity a national, regional and global goal and to address current challenges – such as eradicating hunger and poverty; ensuring food and nutritional security, access to affordable, safe, efficacious and quality medicines as well as to safe drinking-water and sanitation, employment and decent work and social protection; protecting environments and delivering equitable economic growth through resolute action on social determinants of health across all sectors and at all levels;

Welcoming the discussions and results of the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 19–21 October 2011),

1. ENDORSES the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health adopted by the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health, including as a key input to the work of Member States¹ and WHO;

2. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to implement the pledges made in the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health with regard to (i) better governance for health and development, (ii) promoting participation in policy-making and implementation, (iii) further reorienting the health sector towards reducing health inequities, (iv) strengthening global governance and collaboration, and (v) monitoring progress and increasing accountability;

(2) to develop and support policies, strategies, programmes and action plans that address social determinants of health, with clearly defined goals, activities and accountability mechanisms and with resources for their implementation;

(3) to support the further development of the health-in-all-policies approach as a way to promote health equity;

(4) to build capacities among policy-makers, managers, and programme workers in health and other sectors to facilitate work on social determinants of health;

(5) to give due consideration to social determinants of health as part of the deliberations on sustainable development, in particular in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and deliberations in other United Nations forums with relevance to health;

3. CALLS UPON the international community to support the implementation of the pledges made in the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health for action on social determinants of health, including through:

(1) supporting the leading role of WHO in global health governance and promoting alignment of policies, plans and activities on social determinants of health with those of its partner organizations in the United Nations system, development banks and other key international organizations, including in joint advocacy, and in facilitating access to the provision of financial and technical assistance to countries and regions, in particular developing countries;

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

- (2) strengthening international cooperation, with a view to promoting health equity in all countries, through facilitating transfer on mutually agreed terms of expertise, technologies and scientific data in the field of social determinants of health, as well as exchanging good practices for managing intersectoral policy development;
 - (3) facilitating access to financial resources;
4. URGES those developed countries which have pledged to achieve the target of 0.7% of gross national product for official development assistance by 2015, and those developed countries that have not yet done so, to make additional concrete efforts to fulfil their commitments in this regard, and also urges developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets;
5. REQUESTS the Director-General:
- (1) to duly consider social determinants of health in the assessment of global needs for health, including in the WHO reform process and WHO's future work;
 - (2) to provide support to Member States in implementing the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health through approaches such as "health-in-all policies" in order to address social determinants of health;
 - (3) to work closely with other organizations in the United Nations system on advocacy, research, capacity-building and direct technical assistance to Member States for work on social determinants of health;
 - (4) to continue to convey and advocate the importance of integrating social determinants of health perspectives into forthcoming United Nations and other high-level meetings related to health and/or social development;
 - (5) to report to the Sixty-sixth and Sixty-eighth World Health Assemblies, through the Executive Board, on progress in implementing this resolution and the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health.

Eleventh meeting, 21 January 2012
EB130/SR/11

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