

29 September 2009

Hon Tony Ryall
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Ryall

Further to our meeting with Iain Potter and myself on 2 September, please find enclosed two papers:

- The HSC's role as a National Health Promotion Service Provider.
- Recommendations on Healthy Eating.

Please note, the benefits of health promotion and prevention have not been addressed in these papers as we believe that is more appropriately addressed at the policy level. Needless to say we are strong proponents of health promotion and prevention as a way of achieving improved population health outcomes, as well as contributing to the reduction in demand for personal health services and constraining future costs.

Please also note that these papers represent our preliminary thinking and we can expand the ideas and give more information about the HSC's capability and capacity.

We would appreciate an early opportunity to meet with you to further discuss the ideas presented in the papers.

Thank you and regards

Hayden Wano
Chairman

HSC - a National Health Promotion Entity

Following your invitation to submit ideas about national health promotion, the HSC has drafted a proposal for a national entity.

The revised structure for the health sector outlined in the Ministerial Review Group Report suggests the Ministry of Health should focus on policy, a Health Funding Board would focus on funding and contract monitoring, and Pharmac should have increased bulk purchasing responsibilities (medicines and clinical items). There are opportunities for a national health promotion service to add value to this revised structure.

Recommendation

The HSC become a national health promotion entity. With 20 years successfully operating in the health and social sectors, the HSC has the capability and capacity to provide a national health promotion service. Key benefits are listed below.

Use of an existing facility with healthy lifestyles capability and experience

The HSC is already mandated in legislation to promote healthy lifestyles and the organisation has the experience, capability and capacity to respond to existing and emerging health issue/s and develop practical solutions.

Financial efficiencies

Gains would be made through the bulk buying of promotions, resources, research and evaluation. There would be additional financial efficiencies in staffing and infrastructure.

Knowledge and information dissemination

A national entity would communicate consistent, credible information and research.

Support for frontline workers

Frontline workers would be supported with a wide range of functions, including resources and information, designed to meet their communities' needs.

Providing national leadership

A national entity would provide a national 'one-stop' health promotion service for connecting consumers and providers, rather than having consumers and providers needing to access different agencies for advice, resources and/or additional support.

Strategic input

A national entity would contribute to strategic discussions about the best strategies to address new and emerging health issues.

Benefits of a National Health Promotion Entity

Using Existing Capability, Capacity and Experience

As an existing Crown Entity, the HSC already has the statutory mandate to promote health and encourage healthy lifestyles. Bringing together the national health promotion services currently being delivered by the HSC and the Ministry of Health would create efficiencies and cost savings for Government. A change in service specification would be needed, and a more direct accountability relationship with the Minister of Health would strengthen the capability of a health promotion entity (accountability is currently channelled through the Ministry of Health).

Crown Entity status allows the HSC to sit independently alongside the Ministry of Health and the National Health Board (each being accountable to the Minister for their respective areas of responsibility).

Existing capacity within the HSC includes:

- respected research and evaluation capability
- significant health promotion experience and capability.

In addition, the HSC has:

- established connections with government, NGOs, business and community organisations
- excellent connections to frontline and provider networks
- proven responsiveness, including delivering cost-effective services.

Efficiency

Developing and providing nationally consistent healthy lifestyle resources, which can be adapted for local use, minimises duplication and creates cost-efficiencies. As an example, a number of DHBs recently asked the HSC to produce a resource for use in their local communities. A total of 160,000 copies of the resource were produced at a cost of \$12,453. If the 21 DHBs produced 8,000 copies each of the same resource, it would have cost a total of \$98,847 (excluding labour costs). By undertaking this work HSC saved the health sector \$86,394.

By acting as a 'bulk buyer' of robust research and evaluation, including consumer testing, the HSC can provide economies of scale and greater efficiencies. Rather than 21 DHBs undertaking separate research to provide direction for their messages and communications, the HSC can provide more robust and reliable results, which can be shared with DHBs and other agencies.

Where paid advertising is used, there is potential for significant bulk buying discounts. The HSC has already been able to negotiate annual savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars across programme areas.

Knowledge and Information Dissemination

A national entity would assist community-based health workers within DHBs, PHOs and community settings by acting as a central hub and disseminator of research and evaluation knowledge.

Any strategy for promoting health – whether through communications or changes in service provision – needs to be based on an understanding of what the public needs or there is the risk of wasting health dollars. The HSC carries out a significant amount of research to foster a better understanding of the attitudes and needs of the public to ensure initiatives and information are effective.

Efficiency and quality gains can be achieved by having a small group of social and behavioural researchers focused on understanding and evaluating audience needs, wants, supportive factors, barriers to success, etc.

Providing accurate, consistent and credible knowledge and information across the nation avoids the need for each community to duplicate this work. Frontline staff can then focus on their core work, linking it to evidence-based messages communicated nationally. This approach is also key to maximising the success of health messages.

Support for Frontline Workers

A national entity would provide the capacity and capability to act as an essential support mechanism for frontline workers across a range of functions from research and evaluation (and dissemination of results) to the production of printed resources that can be used, or adapted for use, across a range of communities.

Community-based health workers already actively seek support from the HSC to do their work. The HSC recently undertook a small survey with DHB staff, who expressed a strong need for support in their work with communities.

Leadership

Good leadership is critical for any future success in health promotion. HSC believes there has been a gap in leadership in recent years around strategy, as well as decisions about implementation.

HSC would demonstrate leadership by:

- **being actively sought** and involved in the early stages of the decision-making process, and being able to strategise and develop pragmatic solutions
- **credibility** – being an 'intelligent' service provider with a breadth of experience in health promotion
- **good connections** with government, non-government, business, academic, and community groups - enabling the agency to keep abreast of current issues, taking into account sector concerns and mediating solutions

- **being prepared to take risks** - but also being able to manage risks
- **skilfully negotiating** in tough situations and settle differences with minimal noise
- **bringing together/connecting disparate groups** to ensure they communicate with each other and work together to meet individual and shared goals
- **being seen as an agency of choice** (one-stop shop) for connecting consumers and providers, rather than having consumers and providers going to several different agencies for advice, resources and/or additional support
- **an ability to work on a range of issues and services**, including areas such as housing, transport, leisure and community safety
- running a **cost-effective** entity.

Summary

In summary the HSC can deliver benefits described above simply by negotiating and adding specific service schedules to our existing baseline contract. We seek an early opportunity to discuss this paper further with you.

Chairman's Report

Response From Minister

In early November I received a response from the Minister to our proposals around assuming more responsibilities as a national health promotion entity and on healthy eating – text below. I will provide an update at the meeting.

Dear Hayden

Thank you for your letter of 29 September 2009 and the two papers on: HSC's role in Health Promotion, and on Healthy Eating.

As you will appreciate, it is too early at this point for any decisions. However I am currently considering the matters raised and would like to engage you further on the way forward in due course.

Yours sincerely

Tony

Hon Tony Ryall
Minister of Health

