

The Pathway to a Canberra Statement on the Future of Health Promotion in Australia

The 15th National Conference of the Australian Health Promotion Association included a series of workshops and feedback sessions established to give the almost 500 participants the opportunity to articulate their vision for the future of health promotion. Visioning workshops were held on each of the three days of the conference and feedback sessions were held at the conclusion of each of the first two days. Participants addressed the question: "What is our vision of health promotion in Australia in 20 years time?"

The results of these workshops and feedback sessions were presented to the final session of the conference and will be crafted into a *Canberra Statement on the Future of Health Promotion in Australia* in the coming months by the Management Committee of the Australian Health Promotion Association. The Association will then use the Statement as to set strategic direction for action in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, and workforce development. The full list of suggested visions is quite lengthy so I present below the most consistent themes and ideas that emerged from the workshops and feedback sessions. I hope these can be used by the drafters of the Bangkok Charter as a sort of testing ground for the principles and frameworks that will be presented at the 6th Global Conference. It is important to frame these as the reflections of one national meeting in one country - there was not a request for a global vision of health promotion but a national one.

The five areas of vision that were consistently called for in each of the sessions were:

- The breaking down of barriers and silos;
- The building of new bridges and partnerships;
- A substantial re-distribution of resources;
- A strengthening of the citizenry and their capacity to promote health and wellbeing; and
- A re-shaping of the field of health promotion.

One of the most consistently articulated visions was that of a health and wellbeing system that emphasises the importance of health promotion as much as it stresses the need for clinical treatment and care. The achievement of this vision will require the adoption of principles of health promotion and wellbeing more widely across the health sector. It will also require demonstrated commitment to these principles through investment, creation of infrastructure to support the realisation of these principles and significant workforce development to ensure that the necessary work can be done. A specific vision that reflected this re-orientation was the repeated call for the creation of a national ministry of health promotion, wellbeing and/or sustainability (the ministry was called for in each workshop but was assigned a different name in each). Such a ministry would serve to ensure that these principles and actions were achieved.

Fundamental philosophical shifts seen as necessary to create this vision included:

- Increased integration between social and ecological spheres of health;

- Clearly articulated and broadly accepted focus on health and wellbeing gains for all Australians with the result being the elimination of health disparities and inequities;
- A strong, measurable and national commitment to addressing the social determinants of health in Australia;
- Strong social movements and political activism that demonstrate popular commitment to the promotion of health and wellbeing; and
- The widespread adoption of participatory planning and research models that centre on the needs of people rather than the perceptions of bureaucrats, academics and health care professionals.

Some visionaries articulated means of achieving some of these philosophical shifts including:

- Re-distribution of resources to meet the focus on addressing the social determinants of health and the elimination of disparities/inequities;
- New approaches to addressing the social determinants of health that are soundly based in clear economic cases that demonstrate the benefits of investing in the social determinants;
- Active efforts to create a culture of responsibility and reciprocity (social capital);
- Strong leadership committed to working with these principles and achieving these goals at all levels and sectors (community; government; non-government; clinical and non-clinical);
- Increased integration and alliances across all sectors from local to global levels;
- The adoption of an assessment of the health impact of all public policies;
- The development, dissemination and training in tools for practical and participatory evaluation;
- An increased respect for qualitative data;
- More demonstrated holistic research and monitoring; and
- The creation of a culture of respect for different ways of knowing.

The Australian Health Promotion Association takes great pride in the successful conference held in Canberra and is committed to working to achieve the collective visions for health promotion articulated at that conference. This will mean a more pointed and active level of advocacy with governments, non-government agencies and community organisations at all levels. It will require years of consistent lobbying and further demonstration of the evidence around the effectiveness of health promotion. The visions articulated by the conference will shape the future action and direction of the AHPA. It is now the Management Committee's task to determine the short, medium and long-term goals of the Association in working to achieve the vision. It is important to note, however, that the Association will not be able to achieve this vision on its own, but through partnerships and collaborations with many others. It is hoped that the enthusiasm that was generated by the participants in the workshops and in other parts of the conference has created a genuine interest and momentum for the achievement of these visions. I hope these ideas are useful to you.

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