



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Sport**

Ref No: MC17-015548

23 OCT 2017

Mayor David O'Loughlin
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor

David

I refer to your letter of 22 August 2017 regarding Resolutions 35, 42, 43, 89 and F by members of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) who gathered in Canberra from 18 to 21 June 2017 for the National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA).

As you know, whilst preventive health is a national responsibility, jurisdictions are responsible for delivering specific preventive health programs with the Australian Government providing an overarching policy leadership role. As such, the Government supports the effective delivery of preventive health initiatives to reduce health-related risk factors within the Australian population through a range of efforts including (but not limited to) developing and implementing evidence-based preventive health and food regulatory policies; promoting healthy eating and physical activity; improving early detection, treatment and survival outcomes for people with cancer; improving access to mental health support services; implementation of the Immunise Australia Program, reducing harm to individuals and communities from misuse of alcohol, pharmaceuticals and use of illicit drugs; and reducing the harmful effects of tobacco use.

The Australian Government's focus includes providing evidence-based population health information so that people are in the best position to make informed decisions and take control of their own health and wellbeing.

In respect of the ALGA resolutions, which were an outcome of the recent NGA, please see my detailed response against each of these resolutions as attached.

Thank you for writing to me on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hunt

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Australian Government Department of Health
response to the
Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), National General Assembly
of Local Government (NGA) 18-21 June 2017
Resolutions 35, 42, 43, 89 and F

Resolution Number 35

The Australian Government recognises that quality local sporting infrastructure enhances the capacity for communities to engage and participate in sport. The Government has a proud history of providing assistance for a range of sporting initiatives, from small community projects in regional and urban areas to facility upgrades of major sporting venues.

At the recent meeting of Commonwealth, state and territory Sports Ministers on 18 August 2017, the importance of supporting the engagement of women and girls in sport and recreation was discussed and further work is being undertaken by government officials to prepare a 'women in sport' policy and reporting framework. I expect suitable infrastructure for women and girls to be identified as an area to be addressed.

A current Australian Government infrastructure program that may be suitable for providing funds for the upgrade of local sporting infrastructure including the building and maintenance of 'female friendly' sporting facilities and amenities is the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF).

The BBRF provides funding for infrastructure projects and community investments to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future. It invests in projects outside of the major capital cities and applications are assessed in three categories depending on the size of the project. This means applications for small grants are not competing with large projects for funding.

Round 1 of the BBRF has closed, however advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development is that Round 2 will be open for applications in late 2017 (there are no indicative dates at this time). ALGA members should be advised to monitor the website: www.business.gov.au/bbrf for up to date information on Round 2 of the BBRF.

Another option available to local government is the use of the Australian Sports Foundation (ASF). The ASF provides assistance to not-for-profit, incorporated and other eligible organisations, such as sporting clubs, local councils, schools and community groups, to raise funds for sport related projects that aim to increase opportunities for Australians to participate in sport. Further information can be found on the ASF website at www.asf.org.au or by telephone on (02) 6214 7868.

Resolution Number 42

At the 4 August 2017 COAG Health Council (CHC) meeting, Health Ministers endorsed the National Fifth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (Fifth Plan) and its Implementation Plan. The Fifth Plan outlines 32 actions for collaborative government action across eight priority areas:

1. Achieving integrated regional planning and service delivery
2. Effective suicide prevention
3. Coordinated treatment and supports for people with severe and complex mental illness
4. Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention

5. Improving the physical health of people living with mental illness and reducing early mortality
6. Reducing stigma and discrimination
7. Making safety and quality central to mental health service delivery
8. Ensuring that the enablers of effective system performance and system improvement are in place

The Fifth Plan has been developed on behalf of all Health Ministers by the Mental Health Principal Committee (MHDAPC) of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC).

The Fifth Plan falls exclusively within the remit of all Health Ministers, with joint responsibility for implementing and monitoring national action to drive mental health reform. It acknowledges that mental health services in Australia can be fragmented and are often provided within a complex system that involves multiple providers and complex funding arrangements. The Fifth Plan seeks to establish a national approach for collaborative government effort over the next five years, from 2017 to 2022. It builds on previous national mental health plans, as well as state and territory mental health plans.

Resolution Number 43

The Australian Government recognises the important role Primary Health Networks (PHNs) have in delivering locally led preventive health activities and is committed to identifying and addressing the barriers and enablers to PHNs engaging in preventive health initiatives. For instance, the Government is investing approximately \$545 million over four years in drug and alcohol treatment under the Drug and Alcohol Program, with approximately \$412.1 million of this investment provided to PHNs to commission locally based treatment in line with community need.

In the area of cancer prevention, a series of key resources have been developed under the direction of the CHC. The Australian Government encourages the integration of Optimal Cancer Pathways (OCPs) into PHN pathways to identify gaps in current cancer services and inform quality improvement initiatives across all aspects of the care pathway from prevention, through to survivorship and end-of-life care.

The Australian Government aims to educate all Australians about the health benefits of regular participation in physical activity through the provision of evidence-based guidelines including Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. Recently, Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for 0-5 year olds have been reviewed and updated in light of significant changes to the way infants and young children are increasingly exposed to electronic media which increases their screen time and sedentary behaviour. These new Guidelines are expected to be released in November 2017. The Guidelines are a valuable resource available to all PHNs for the purpose of informing the population about the 'appropriate levels' of activity to receive a health benefit.

The Australian Government supports the effective delivery of preventive health initiatives to reduce health related risk factors within the Australian population through a range of efforts. The National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions (the Framework) has been agreed by all Health Ministers and was launched on 22 May 2017 as the overarching policy for the prevention and management of chronic conditions in Australia.

The Framework provides guidance for the development and implementation of policies, strategies, actions and services to address chronic conditions, improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, and deliver a more sustainable health system. It addresses primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of chronic conditions and better caters for shared health determinants, risk factors and multi-morbidities across a broad range of chronic health conditions.

In particular, Objective 1, “Focus on prevention for a healthier Australia” addresses primary prevention of chronic conditions. It acknowledges the diverse range of factors that influence health and wellbeing, including both behavioural and biomedical risk factors, such as tobacco and alcohol use, physical inactivity, poor diet and nutrition, as well as overweight and obesity. The Framework is available on the Department’s website at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/nsfcc>.

Resolution Number 89

Exposure to rural training as a means of improving the recruitment and retention of medical professionals in rural areas has been a key workforce strategy for the Australian Government over the last twenty years.

The Australian Government makes a significant contribution to supporting rural training experiences for medical students through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program, which supports a network of 18 rural clinical schools, 15 university departments of rural health, and six dental faculties supporting extended rural placements. Currently, all medical schools offering Australian Government supported medical places participate in the RHMT Program (with the exception of Curtin University Medical School). Participating universities must meet a series of rural training requirements, including that at least 25% of each medical school cohort must come from a rural background, and 25% of medical students must complete a year of their clinical training in a rural area. Further information on the RHMT Program can be found on the Department of Health’s website at www.health.gov.au. Funding of \$543 million over the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018 has been committed to the RHMT Program.

You may also be interested to know that the Australian Government has recently implemented a new initiative, the Integrated Rural Training Pipeline for Medicine, which is designed to better connect the various stages of medical training (undergraduate through to prevocational and specialist training), allowing trainees to complete more of their training in a rural community rather than having to return to the cities. Further information on this initiative is also available on the Department of Health website.

With respect to ALGA’s call for new rural medical schools, on 14 December 2016, the Assistant Minister for Health, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, announced an assessment of the distribution of medical school places across Australia. The assessment process will take account of workforce data that indicates there is no need for additional medical places across the country, but rather a need to focus on the distribution of those places. Any future Government decisions will be informed by the results of this national assessment process, which is being jointly undertaken by the Australian Government Departments of Health and Education and Training. It will be completed later in 2017.

Resolution Number F

The Australian Government recognises the importance of physical activity, including walking. To demonstrate this commitment, the Government announced in the 2017-18 Budget additional funding of \$15 million over four years to address the critical preventive health focus of cardio-vascular programs by increasing support for people's activity levels and healthy lifestyles to prevent chronic disease. Of this, \$10 million will fund a Prime Minister's Walk for Life Challenge which aims to encourage innovative physical activity ideas in schools, universities and communities, and increase physical activity among all Australians through a 10,000 steps a day challenge.