AGENDA ITEM 2: DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Key Activities from April – June 2008

- The MCHP website has been revamped and updated to make it easier to navigate and to ensure that all recent materials are on the site. There have been a number of recent calls from media and policy people who have been using the site and found it useful (e.g. SBS Insight; Department of Human Services in Victoria, Medical Observer, Government News newsletter).
- Detailed analyses of the health provisions in the 2008-09 Budget and spending on Indigenous health by the Rudd Government have been completed and are now on the website. Brief summaries of the 2008-09 health budgets from the States and Territories have also been prepared. We are also keeping and regularly updating a scorecard of the Government’s election commitments against funding and implementation announcements and this is also on the website.
- Professional Public Relations has been engaged to assist in establishing a regular MCHP newsletter and to provide some continuing support. First edition should be ready by mid August.
- An informal partnership arrangement has been established with the Health Services Research Association of Australia and New Zealand (HSRAANZ), focusing on developing research capacity in health services and policy.
- Steve Leeder is a Chief Investigator on three 2008 NHMRC Capacity Building Grant applications: Health economics (Steve Jan); Health Policy (Richard Taylor); and Respiratory Health (Guy Marks).
- Steve Leeder and Jim Gillespie are Chief Investigators on a NHMRC Project Grant application on population health policy research with Simon Chapman, School of Public Health.
- The report ‘Healthy parks, healthy people’ commissioned by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change was submitted in June. The report was authored by Stephen Jan, Alison Hayes, Amanda Dominello and Stephen Leeder.
- The Menzies-Nous National Survey of Attitudes towards the Health System has received Human Research Ethics Committee approval and fieldwork will be completed in July and August.

Events

- 26 June: Menzies Oration- Mr Gary Banks, Chairman Productivity Commission. The topic of this event was Health Costs and Policy in an Ageing Australia. Mr Banks’ analysis challenged existing assumptions that the ageing population will contribute relatively modestly to increasing health costs. He pointed out that ageing ‘baby boomers’ will have higher expectations from the system than their predecessors and will expect better treatment and care that will be more expensive.
- 28 May: New policy buzz words: Prevention and primary care. This seminar discussed what these “Buzz Words” mean, where this health area currently is in terms of functionality, and where opportunities lie for future growth. It was well attended by over 100 people, including key media.
6 May: Health Conundrums seminar with Minter Ellison- Exploring the policy and legal framework behind Australia's health and ageing system. Senator Jan McLucas and Lynne Peach both offered commentary on the regulation of therapeutic goods and nanotechnology. Senator McLucas discussed the complexities of regulation, particularly in emerging areas such as nanotechnology that transcend traditional regulatory frameworks.

Commenced planning for:

- July 22 seminar with Brain and Mind Research Institute on Re-finding the plot: how to regain direction for mental health policy in Australia.
- July 31 seminar on Indigenous health: closing the gap for metropolitan communities.
- July/August, in partnership with Australian Primary Healthcare Research Institute (APHCRI), to conduct a process with the NHHRC to identify possible future approaches to the delivery of primary care.
- 9 October: Emerging Health Policy Research Conference, We have already begun to receive submissions for this annual event, and have established a group of judges to review each submission.
- September/October, with the Australian Centre for Economic Research in Health (ACERH), to conduct a public seminar on health financing options.
- The next Health Conundrums seminar with Minter Ellison.
- A public seminar in association with the Australian centre for Economic research on Health at ANU on options for reforming health financing in Australia.

Education

One of the principal objectives of the Centre includes training researchers to such a level that they will have the capacity to participate meaningfully in national and international research programs on health policy and to undertake research training activities and programs that are consistent with these objectives. Over the last quarter the Menzies Centre has provided a focus for expanding postgraduate programs in health policy at the University of Sydney.

- Staff of the Menzies Centre have continued to expand the health policy teaching programs based in the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney. The program has a national profile – drawing students employed in health policy organizations in the ACT, Victoria and Queensland as well as NSW.
- Steve Leeder and Jim Gillespie convene the Graduate Certificate and Diploma in Health Policy. Lesley Russell and Masoud Mirzaei contribute to this teaching program. Jim Gillespie teaches the health policy components of the Masters of Public Health and Masters of International Public Health.
- The Faculty of Medicine has agreed that the postgraduate health policy program should be offered at Masters level from 2009. The extended program will be taught in association with the Sax Institute (NSW Health) and the George Institute for International Health.
- In June, Steve Leeder and Jim Gillespie made presentations to an external review of the Master of Public Health. The review has recommended a significant increase in the weight of health systems and policy studies in the MPH.
- International education programs are less developed. Jim Gillespie prepared a course on the Australian health and pharmaceutical regulatory systems for a Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific Executive Education Program on Comparative Management and Distribution of
MENZIES CENTRE FOR HEALTH POLICY

Pharmaceuticals: The Australian Experience for the China State Food and Drug Administration, May 6-12.

- Menzies Centre staff now supervise 10 PhD students (SRL 4 students; JAG 3 students as principal supervisor and 3 as associate supervisor).
- Maher Salahi, a medical student at Vanderbilt University, commenced an internship in May for 2 months. He is sponsored by his university to do a comparative study of the American and Australian health care systems, with particular reference to the way in which CVD patients are treated. Lesley Russell is his supervisor.
- Grace Chung and Elisa Aponte, Medical students at School of Medicine of New York University, completed their internship and their paper titled: ‘The approach to chronic disease: A comparison of type 2 diabetes strategies in Australian states’ was accepted for oral presentation by the Population Health Congress 2008 which was held early July. They drafted a manuscript out of their research which is under review by co-authors from the MCHP. Masoud Mirzaei is their supervisor.
- Kathy Zhang, Medical student from the Sophi Davis School of the City College of New York, commenced an internship in 1st of July 2008 for 2 months. She has a scholarship from her university to do a comparative case study on Indigenous chronic illness management policies of one state of Australia, United States and Canada. Masoud Mirzaei is her supervisor.
- Surianti Sukeri, a PhD student from Malaysia, is on a scholarship from the Malaysian Government. Her thesis titled: ‘The impact of cardiovascular disease on families in Malaysia’ and she has been reviewing the literature and designing her project over the last three months. Stephen Leeder and Masoud Mirzaei are her supervisors.

Policy Inquiries and Submissions

With the election of a new federal government there has been a spate of inquiries into the future reform of the health system. The Menzies Centre has been prominent in assisting these commissions and in providing expert media commentary. At state level, the continuing problems of the NSW health system has given the Centre opportunities to intervene in debates over the future of acute care.

- Steve Leeder presented to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals. This presentation was supported by a written submission from AHPI/MCHP and included an analysis of NSW hospital data done by Lesley Russell.
- Steve Leeder and Jim Gillespie gave presentations to the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC) roundtable on care for people with chronic and complex care needs, 5 June. A written submission made to the NHHRC from MCHP on March 28 focused on serious and continuing illnesses, the work of SCIPPS, the impact of the current structures of the health system on people with chronic illness, and identified suggested ways forward for the Commission.
- A submission has been made to the NHMRC Nutbeam Review. The purpose of the Review is to identify the ways in which NHMRC can marshal its funding to most effectively contribute to improved public health in Australia. The submission focussed on the need for health policy research to be adequately funded and supported by the NHMRC.
- Bob Wells participated in a NHHRC roundtable on health and medical research.
- Bob Wells is assisting the NHHRC on primary health care issues.
Discussion Papers

Russell L. A Primary Care Reform Agenda for Australia.

Russell L & Leeder S. Making a difference in Indigenous health: some cost-effective recommendations.

These are on the MCHP website. Australian Policy Online asked for and was granted permission to upload the primary care paper on their website.

Conferences/Presentations

- Steve Leeder was invited to the 2020 Summit and participated in the Health Stream.
- Steve Leeder gave the Inaugural Oration at the Deakin University’s Medical School, Deakin University, 1 May 2008. His oration addressed the subject of the future of the medical workforce. This was taken up in a subsequent article in Australian Doctor.
- Steve Leeder contributed to a section on health care at Advance Australia Where? Thinking about health, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sydney, 3 May 2008. This was a one-day public seminar with Hugh McKay and Ray Youins, which followed the 2020 Summit.
- Lesley Russell and Steve Leeder were invited to the 2008 Davos Futures Summit on 11-13 May where both acted as expert panellists.
- Bob Wells conducted a session on ‘lobbying for policy outcomes’ at GP Research Conference, Hobart, 4 June 2008.
- Bob Wells was a panel member at Australian Financial Review Health Summit, Melbourne, 25 June 2008.

Research-Serious and Continuing Illness Policy and Practice Study (SCIPPS)

- The SCIPPS research team is in the process of writing up the results of the qualitative research study, which took place in the first stage of the project. There are currently seven manuscripts that are being prepared for submission to refereed journals.
- The research team has also disseminated results at two recent conferences: (1) the General Practice and Primary Health Care Research Conference in Hobart and (2) the Population Health Congress 2008 in Brisbane. In total seven oral presentations and five poster presentations have been given. All posters and oral presentations were very well received and a good level of interest has been generated about SCIPPS in these national forums. The research team will continue to disseminate results of SCIPPS at national conferences in the coming months.
- SCIPPS is now in the second phase of the research project, where interventions will be developed in order to address the key problems identified by patients, family carers and health care professionals. This development stage has also been intimately informed by literature searches and inputs provided by reference groups and individual meetings with key policy makers and program planners in both the SWAHS and the ACT.
following broad areas for intervention were confirmed at the recent SCIPPS Management Meeting held on 18 June 2008:
1. Interventions arising out of key partnerships with SWAHS (HealthOne, Care Navigation and Primary Care & Community Health Network’s alternative connectivity pilot) and ACT Health (Diabetes Outreach and Masterclasses)
2. Informing policy in a variety of different ways (e.g. the whole process of SCIPPS itself as an intervention; mapping of the policy process in chronic disease management; influencing policy beyond health policy, eg, DEST study into literacy)
A number of sub-studies related to the core objectives of SCIPPS are also in development and operation in both study areas.

Governance

- See agenda Item 7.

Peer reviewed Publications


Medical Newspapers (SRL)


- Leeder SR. Do we have enough doctors in the house? Australian Medicine. 2 June 2008.


Media/ public engagement

- Russell L. Health reforms can learn from past. Canberra Times. 27 March 2008.
- Russell L. Keeping the doctor away takes more than money. Crikey 3 April 2008.
- Russell L. Participant in SBS Insight program on dental health policies, May 19, 2008.
- Bracey A. GP-driven prevention could leave the have-nots worse off. Medical Observer 20 June 2008. Extensive quotes from L Russell and MJA paper.
- Steve Leeder has offered commentary to several media outlets including the Financial Review, ABC Radio and The Medical Observer about the 2020 Summit.
- 26 June: Steve Leeder was interview by ABC TV News in regards to the idea of putting calorie and nutritional labels on restaurant menus.