



MERCY

HEALTH & AGED CARE

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DIRECTOR
PUBLIC HEALTH

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Stephan

For follow up on Ms

Thanks Maree

14 December 2005

Dr Robert Hall
Director Public Health & Chief Health Officer
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 1670N
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Dr Hall,

Further to your request for comments on the Review of the Health Act 1958, I offer the following response.

In general, as outlined in the discussion document we remain committed to a review of the Act.

In reading the Draft Act, concerns do exist with the role of Chief Health Officer. It appears the responsibilities associated with this role are somewhat mixed between that of a traditional Chief Medical Officer and Public Health Officer. This raises concerns with the type of applicant and breadth of experience required to undertake the duties. Further, much of the role in various Recommendations (including 17, 18, 23, 73, 118) appear more related to Public Health Officers rather than a Chief Health Officer role.

It may be preferable to have a Chief Public Health Officer as the title which is more aligned with the duties required and outlines the need to have a public healthcare background essential in dealing with epidemiology, public health, outbreak control and food safety control etc.

The appointment of the Chief Health Officer is interesting and it is noted that the Officer is not a direct report of the Secretary. This seems counterproductive to public health and as such, it would be recommended that this be a Secretariat appointment. Thus in turn, many of the powers currently sitting with the Secretary should remain with delegation as required (e.g. Recommendation 73, 118, 166, 167).

In relation to Recommendation 23, it appears that these positions should be Public Health positions not Council Medical Officers. Again, the expertise required centres around population health and basic public health and as such, specific expertise in this area would produce better results.

MERCY HEALTH & AGED CARE - HEALTH SERVICES

LEVEL 6, 163 STUDLEY ROAD HEIDELBERG VIC 3084 - TELEPHONE 03 8458 4905 FACSIMILE 03 8458 4766

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INNOVATION

STEWARDSHIP

TEAMWORK



24 Public Health positions could be supported by Environmental Officers as outlined in the Act.

I trust these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Cornelissen
Chief Operating Officer
Mercy Health & Aged Care – Health Services

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