



Received  
 3/7/09 JOL

The Hon Julie Owens MP  
 Chair  
 Standing Committee on Procedure  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600

Submission No. 8

Dear Ms Owens, Julie

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into effectiveness of House of Representatives domestic and general purpose standing committees.

As you are aware, I am the chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing. The Committee conducts inquiries into matters referred to it by the House of Representatives or a Minister of the Commonwealth Government.

The Committee could also inquire into matters raised in annual reports of Commonwealth Government departments and authorities or reports by the Commonwealth Auditor-General.

The standing committee is one of thirteen general purpose investigatory committees established by the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia.

For the 42nd Parliament the Committee comprises of 10 Members of the House of Representatives, with six Members nominated by the Government and four nominated by the non-Government parties.

- Mr Steve Georganas MP (Chair) (Australian Labor Party, Hindmarsh, SA)
- Mr Steve Irons MP (Deputy Chair) (Liberal Party of Australia, Swan, WA)
- Mr James Bidgood MP (Australian Labor Party, Dawson, QLD)
- Mr Mark Coulton MP (The Nationals, Parkes, NSW)
- Mrs Joanna Gash MP (Liberal Party of Australia, Gilmore, NSW)
- Ms Jill Hall MP (Australian Labor Party, Shortland, NSW)
- Mrs Julia Irwin MP (Australian Labor Party, Fowler, NSW)
- Ms Catherine King MP (Australian Labor Party, Ballarat, VIC)
- Mrs Margaret May MP (Liberal Party of Australia, McPherson, QLD)
- Ms Amanda Rishworth MP (Australian Labor Party, Kingston, SA)

The most recent inquiry was into the growing epidemic of obesity in Australia, with the report "Weighing it Up" being tabled on 1 June 2009.

This report generated significant interest in the community, and is important in that the recommendations from this report will feed into the Government's broader preventative health strategy due to be released soon.

The Committee inquired into and reported on the increasing prevalence of obesity in the Australian population, focusing on future implications for Australia's health system.

The Committee made recommendations as to what governments, industry, individuals and the broader community can do to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic in children, youth and adults.

Significant previous inquiry reports have included:

- The Best Start: Report on the inquiry into breastfeeding, tabled: 9 August 2007
- The Blame Game: Report on the inquiry into health funding, tabled: 4 December 2006
- Future Ageing: Report on the inquiry into long-term strategies to address the ageing of the Australian population over the next 40 years, tabled: 7 March 2005

In terms of upcoming work, the Committee is due to visit the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Draft terms of reference for HAA Committee trip to the Pacific are:

The Committee will inquire into and report on a range of regional health issues in the South Pacific (specifically, our closest neighbours Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) in which Australia has interests, including:

- The rise and spread of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB), malaria and other tropical diseases, and pandemic control;
- The prevalence of eye and ear diseases; and
- The health effects of climate change.

The Committee will examine the extent to which collaborative partnerships exist for dealing with these health issues, and – where relevant- how connections between Australia and its Pacific neighbours might be strengthened in these areas in the future.

The Committee will soon hold a roundtable forum to examine the health impacts of impotence medications in Australia.

The Committee is concerned that some of these medications, which are legally available for sale, may not be clinically tested and may have adverse impacts on men's health and wellbeing.

The Committee also has concerns that medical advice in respect of these medications is being offered to consumers over the telephone in lieu of a face-to-face consultation with a medical practitioner.

The Committee also undertakes various visits to examine significant health issues such as stem cell research, the availability of health services in Indigenous communities and Australia's preparedness for dengue fever.

While in Parliament, the Committee also receives representations regarding various health issues from bodies such as Polio Australia, Vision 2020 and The Freemasons Foundation Centre for Men's Health.

The Committee is very effective and is adequately resourced. The Committee is also very active and the work it undertakes makes a significant contribution to broader policy development which in turn supports the health of the Australian community.

If you wish to discuss further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Federal Member for Hindmarsh

3 July 2009