

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Christine Morris

POSITION: Conve nor

ORGANISATION: National Oral Health Promotion Steering Group

SUBMISSION1: The National Oral Health Promotion Steering Group would like to see oral health integrated into strategies for Obesity, Alcohol and Tobacco. There are common risk factors for all of these. The common risk factor approach recognises that major public health conditions (such as heart disease, cancers, and oral diseases) share a set of common risk factors, including an inadequate diet, smoking and alcohol misuse and stress which are factors linked to the development of several chronic conditions, including oral diseases.

The key concept of an integrated common risk factor approach is: if action is directed to these common risks and their underlying social determinants, improvements in a range of chronic conditions, including oral health, will be achieved more efficiently and with greater effectiveness. Thus, this approach provides the rationale for working in partnerships with other stakeholders: a key principle of health promotion practice.

One of the major criticisms of traditional oral health education has been its narrow, isolated and compartmentalised approach, with many oral health programs in the past being developed in isolation of other health initiatives. This uncoordinated approach led to duplication of effort, and conflicting and contradictory messages being delivered to the public. Consequently oral health professionals alone cannot expect to achieve meaningful results. Indeed this criticism can also be aimed at general health activities, which more often than not excludes oral health in program initiatives. In recent years oral health promotion programs and strategies have implemented partnership approaches that integrate oral health into general health. These include working with a wide range of health and education professionals from the early years to aged care and with programs such as tobacco cessation, nutrition and organisational and policy development.

The National Oral Health Promotion Steering group has developed a series of briefs outlining how oral health can be integrated into general health which we will submit through email to the Preventative Taskforce. These briefs provide examples of how oral health and general health prevention strategies can be integrated for benefits for both oral and general health.

The National Oral Health Promotion Taskforce supports the three action areas. We are mindful of the importance of the social determinants in prevention and fully support the taskforce promoting policy action in this area.

In the area of obesity many of the initiatives suggested would also improve oral health. These include greater access to healthy food, labelling, reducing food advertising to children, promotion of breastfeeding and specific programs to close the gap. We would also like to see the promotion of (tap) water as the healthy drink of choice as a key initiative for promoting oral health. (In some remote communities a bottle of water is more expensive than soft drink). Exploring ways to reduce the cost of water would be a welcome initiative.

In the area of tobacco we support the strategies to reduce smoking. Oral health professionals can play in supporting smokers to stop smoking, particularly using brief intervention. Some states already have established oral health smoking cessation programs and may be in a position to share this information with others. These would also be in a position to trial NRT with smokers should the opportunity arise.

In the area of alcohol we support for policy and tax initiatives. We would also like to see you explore lower tax for preventive health products such as toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste, especially for Aboriginal, rural and remote communities.

Your papers discuss the importance of monitoring and evaluation. We believe that there is also a need to introduce training nationally to strengthen the capacity of the prevention and health promotion workforce to deliver these important strategies.

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit