Are governments abrogating their public health responsibilities?
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Presentation to the Australian Rural Health Alliance Conference – 9 April 2013

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ABS Socio-Economic Index

* developed from 2011 census
* measures socio-economic advantage/disadvantage by local government area
* social determinants of health
AIHW Health Performance Framework 2012 – Qld A&TSI populations

* 10 year comparison study 2001 – 10
* 30% decline in avoidable mortality and deaths due to circulatory disease
* 40% drop in infant mortality
* chronic disease, high smoking and kidney failure rates unchanged
The state of the states

• A&TSI, drug and special circumstances courts axed (Qld, NSW)
• Funding cut or axed for scores of public health and well-being programs (Qld)
• Banned drinkers register scrapped (NT)
• Proposal for mandatory rehab (prison farms) (NT)
• Upsurge in alcohol-related domestic violence
• 70% of police time in CBDs alcohol-related
• UK study on the effects of welfare cuts in tough times
ACOSS 2012 poverty report

• 120,000 homeless
• 100,000 no fixed address
• One in eight living below the poverty line
• 400,000 in crisis care
• 400,000 with disabilities
• One in four born overseas
• 30,000 prisoners in overcrowded jails
The downsides

• Little access to appropriate housing
• Lack of mobility … no car, no access to public transport
• No access to health or other services
• Single nationality, socially deprived enclaves
• No money
• No health/ income insurance
• No job or job opportunity
The child’s environment

- Poor housing
- Unemployed/ single/ no parents
- No concept of family
- Endemic domestic violence
- Mental health, substance/ alcohol abuse
- Gambling
- Poor school attendance
Prevention vs incarceration

• Nipping the problem in the bud
• Prevention vs acute care
• How to reduce Indigenous incarceration
• The bigger picture in Australian corrections
Are rural workers sufficiently well-informed?

- Skewed approach to health funding
- Disparity in urban/ rural mortality rates
- Cutting community program dollars
- Billions poured into health budgets with little thought for efficiency … targeting of effort
- The “war” on drugs
Decisions made on evidence

- The need for certainty
- Where the final decision rests
- The persuasive power of dollar for dollar funding
- Mental health and AOD … the case for separate funding
An issue of national concern

- Rural health … or the lack of it
- Need for more research into geographically specific areas
- Inequality of access to health care
- National primary health care and preventive health strategies - a more comprehensive approach to health inequalities
- Medicare locals
The ongoing alcohol battle

- Sales at all costs
- Irresponsible approach to promotion
- Governments beholden to alcohol interests
- Lack of policing by venues
- Alcohol too cheap and freely available
- Lack of resolve on alcohol taxation reform
Food for thought

Facebook deal with Diageo fuels under-age drinking fears
Drinks giant’s marketing tie-up on advertising pages raises concerns about health impact on teenagers

Sarah Boseley, health editor
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 20 September 2011 20.40 BST
Article history

Facebook's advertising tie-up with drinks giant Diageo has fueled fears of under-age drinking. Photograph: Action Press / Rex Features
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In conclusion

• Is Government addressing the problems?
• Let’s hear it from the Opposition
• The glacial pace of reform
• *Dropping off the edge …* or should that be *Clawing our way along the precipice?*