

SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE CROWN ENTITIES REFORM BILL

**TO: THE SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIR
Crown Entities Reform Bill
Committee Secretariat
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON**

FROM: Agencies for Nutrition Action

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At Agencies for Nutrition Action (ANA)¹, our main focus of work and experience is in population level nutrition and physical activity health promotion. We are therefore thankful for the opportunity to prepare a submission on the establishment of the new crown entity to be known as, the Health Promotion Agency. By contributing our voice, we hope to maximise the Agency's potential role in health promotion.

Our comments are made in relation of Clause 6 of the Crown Entities Reform Bill. We hope they will be useful in your deliberations.

ANA SUPPORTS THE PURPOSE OF THE AGENCY AS OUTLINED IN CLAUSE 6 OF THE BILL

The Health Promotion Agency's purpose, as stated in Clause 6 of the Bill includes; promoting health and encouraging healthy lifestyles; and enabling environments that support healthy lifestyles. ANA supports this clause as these functions encompass strands of the Ottawa Charter for health promotion. As stated in the Charter effective health promotion can only be achieved through; creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, building healthy public policy, developing personal skills and re-orientating health care services towards prevention of illness and promotion of health.

¹ Agencies for Nutrition Action – Ngā Takawaenga Hāpai Kai Hauora (ANA), is an incorporated society, umbrella NGO established in 1992 10 members of which are major NGO's with a common interest in public health nutrition and physical activity.

The members of ANA are the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society, Te Hotu Manawa Māori, Diabetes New Zealand, Dietitians NZ, NZ Nutrition Foundation, Stroke Foundation, Pacific Island Food and Nutrition Action Group, Diabetes NZ, Home Economics and Technology Teachers Assoc, NZ Recreation Assoc and The Asian Network Inc.

ANA particularly supports the focus on creating environments that support healthy lifestyles. We believe that for people to take personal responsibility for their own health, they need to live, learn, work and play in environments that provide healthy options.

MANAGING THE CHALLENGE OF DIVERSE PRIORITIES

One of the challenges that the Agency will have to manage is the diverse priorities that currently exist in the area of health promotion, as well as any future emerging issues.

ANA recognises that demands for funding in the health sector will only increase and a major challenge for the Government is deciding how to allocate this funding in relation to diverse priorities, not only in health promotion, but for primary care and hospital based clinical services.

Over the years the nutrition and physical activity sector has experienced varying degrees of political support and funding. When it comes to preventing obesity and improving nutrition and physical activity, like most areas in health promotion, long term consistent support and investment in multi faceted approaches are required to make meaningful improvements. Most public health issues cannot be resolved in a three or second term six year political cycle.

The Agency will need to be adequately resourced and have clear strategies for managing the diverse health promotion priorities. ANA is in support of the “ring fencing” of the income from levies from both alcohol and tobacco sales to be spent on minimising the harm of smoking and abuse of alcohol consumption.

ANA SUPPORTS THE PHILOSOPHY OF AN ‘ARMS LENGTH’ AGENCY

We agree with the philosophy that the Agency operate at an ‘arms length’ from the Government. Experience with the former Healthy Eating Health Action Strategy shows the vulnerability of Government led strategies to political change. In this instance the refocusing of resources predominately away from preventative measures was detrimental to the progress of this strategy and it was not given sufficient time to make a difference. ANA would like to highlight the importance of ensuring the Agency’s areas of responsibility and accountability to the Government are clearly defined from the outset.

We recognise that it would be politically difficult for the Agency to function independently from the Government. However, where possible we encourage measures to be put in place which will allow the Agency to tackle longer term issues where there is evidence to inform appropriate health promotion measures. For example, in our sector² one of the key strategies that we have the evidence for is the negative influence of marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children. There already exists

² **Sector** - the workforce working in the prevention of obesity and chronic diseases by improving nutrition and physical activity in communities. It includes health promoters working in NGO’s, DHB’s, Regional Public Health Units, PHO’s, Maori Health organisations, Pacific Health organisations, Asian Health organisations, Regional Sports Trusts, academics and researchers.

tensions between the food industry and public health, and politically it is a difficult but important issue to deal with. An “arms length” Agency may allow this to explore solutions, including the need for regulation/protection of children, outside of the political system, and provide an environment for our children to grow up without being exposed to the marketing of high fat, high sugar and high salt foods.

ANA URGES THE AGENCY TO PRIORITISE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HEALTH PROMOTION

We live in a country that essentially believes everybody deserves a fair opportunity. Yet when it comes to healthy eating and physical activity, not everyone has the same choices on offer to pursue a path to better health. Creating environments where the resources and tools needed to make healthy choices are accessible for all is therefore imperative. ANA continues to work with our members and sector, and would welcome working with the Agency to achieve this common goal.

ANA urges the Agency to prioritise tackling poor nutrition and physical inactivity because they are the two leading causes of morbidity and mortality in New Zealand.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE HEALTH PROMOTION AGENCY

With the down turn in the implementation of the Healthy Eating Healthy Action strategy, ANA has been increasingly concerned about the lack of leadership and common direction for the sector. In particular we wish to raise the point that there is currently no lead agency at the national level, promoting population physical activity.

ANA sees an opportunity for the Health Promotion Agency to fill this gap in providing a population based strategy around physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Historically Sport and Recreation New Zealand have filled this role but more recently their focus has been on sport.

CURRENT INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT THE HEALTH PROMOTION AGENCY

Over the last six months our sector has been working to develop an evidence based vision with accompanying strategies for public health nutrition and physical activity. The reduction in Government leadership promoted our sector to take the initiative to develop this vision which is independent of Government and Government funding. One of the major drivers was to overcome the challenge mentioned above around political change and the longevity of health promotion initiatives. Due to the work that ANA carries out and the relationship we have with the sector, we have been able to lead the drafting of this vision.

For your information the sector **vision** is:

For all New Zealanders to live, learn, work and play in environments that support health eating and physical activity.

To achieve this vision our first objectives, as determined by the sector are:

- *Increase access to affordable and healthy food for all*
- *Ensure parents, carers and whānau are educated and supported to encourage regular physical activity and healthy eating for children*
- *Reduce sedentary behaviour by ensuring the places where we live, learn, work and play support daily recreation, physical activity, sport and active transport.*
- *Decrease the power and exposure of unhealthy food and beverage advertising, particularly to children.*

ANA looks forward to working with the new Agency to advance the Vision objectives to ensure all New Zealanders have the same choices on offer to pursue a path to better health.