

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING STATE PUBLIC HEALTH PLAN

By Hannah Godsave, Manager, Community Policy

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse WALGA's Submission on the draft objectives and priorities for the upcoming State Public Health Plan to be provided to the Department of Health.

RESOLUTION 243.FM/2024

CARRIED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Health has provided [draft objectives and priorities for the upcoming State Public Health Plan](#) for public consultation.
- Stage 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016* commenced on the 4 June 2024 and requires Local Governments to prepare and publish local public health plans by 4 June 2026.
- Local public health plans must consider the State Public Health Plan objectives and priorities as they relate to the needs of their local community.
- WALGA has established a Local Government Public Health Plans Reference Group to inform its feedback to the Department of Health.
- Aligned to WALGA advocacy position 3.2.1 and informed by the Local Government Public Health Plans Reference Group, this submission recommends that:
 - the Department of Health continues to engage with the Local Government sector on the development of documents and support relating to Local Public Health Plans,
 - State Government commits to investing in the preparation and implementation of Local Public Health Plans through additional funding,
 - the State Government ensures equitable access to support and guidance for Local Governments through prioritised recruitment and resources to Population Health Units across the Department of Health and WACHS, especially in non-metro regions,
 - the overarching objective of Equity and Inclusion is repositioned to the top of the diagram to reflect its importance to all other objectives,
 - the State Government invests significantly in supporting the scope and implementation of the new 'managing the effects of climate change on people's health' priority, and
 - the Department of Health sets specific actions under the State Plan and commits to appropriate resourcing.
- Further consultation is expected on the full State Public Health Plan and the Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government in the coming months.
- The People and Place Policy team have approved the recommendation that the submission be provided to State Council for endorsement.

ATTACHMENT

- Draft Submission on the draft objectives and priorities for the upcoming State public health plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This submission is aligned to [WALGA Advocacy Position, 3.2.1 Public Health Act 2016](#):

The Local Government sector supports the introduction of the Public Health Act 2016 and:

- *Development of a clear implementation plan and timelines for the staged implementation of the Act and subsidiary legislation;*
- *Engagement of Local Government in the development of any supporting regulations;*
- *The provision of funding to support smaller rural and regional councils with the development of local Public Health Plans; and*
- *The development of tool and resources to support the introduction of requirements for Public Health Plans.*

March 2015

WALGA is currently updating this advocacy position to reflect the commencement of Stage 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016*, subject to State Council endorsement at its September meeting.

BACKGROUND

- Stage 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016* includes requirements for:
 - State Government to finalise and publish a State Public Health Plan by 4 June 2025, and
 - Local Governments to prepare and publish a Local Public Health Plan (LPHP) by 4 June 2026.
- The upcoming State public health plan will replace the current [State Public Health Plan for Western Australia 2019-2024](#).
- WALGA represents the Sector on the Department of Health's Public Health Planning Reference Group and the newly established Aboriginal Public Health Planning Resources Advisory Group.
- To support the introduction of local public health plans, the Department of Health is also updating the [Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government](#).
- In response to stakeholder concerns regarding support and guidance around the new 'managing the effects of climate change on people's health' priority, the Department of Health has committed to developing a suite of supports accessible to Local Governments.
- The consultation period for the objectives and priorities closed on Tuesday 20 August 2024. WALGA was granted an extension to enable the submission to be considered by State Council.
- The People and Place Policy Team approved the recommendation that the submission be provided to State Council for endorsement.

COMMENT

The submission focuses on the State Plans' objectives and priorities in relation to the Local Government sector, and their requirement to prepare and publish LPHPs by June 2026 under Stage 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016*.

While reference is made in this submission to the need for sufficient resourcing and support for the preparation and implementation of local health plans, this key advocacy issue will be addressed in more detail in future consultation in the full draft State Public Health Plan and the Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government.

WALGA will continue to work with the State Government to secure support and guidance for the sector.

FLYING MINUTE OUTCOME

Poll created: 23/08/2024 at 13:43

Poll closed: 30/08/2024 at 23:59

The submission was endorsed.

**Draft objectives
and priorities for
the upcoming
State Public
Health Plan**

WALGA Submission

September 2024

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Context	3
3.	State Plan Objectives.....	4
4.	State Plan Priorities and Alignments	4
5.	Other Considerations.....	6
6.	Conclusion	6

1. Introduction

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the WA Department of Health on the draft objectives and priorities for the upcoming State Public Health Plan on behalf of the Western Australian Local Government sector.

WALGA is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector.

Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State. WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities.

We do this through effective advocacy to all levels of Government on behalf of our Members, and by the provision of expert advice, services and support to Local Governments.

WALGA's vision is for agile and inclusive Local Governments, enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity.

The Local Government sector in WA is diverse. There are 139 Local Governments across metropolitan and regional WA, varying in geographical size and population base. As a result, there is a significant diversity in the range of functions and services that are provided by Local Government, depending on the size and location of the Local Government.

2. Context

WALGA's submission focuses on the State Public Health Plan's draft objectives and priorities in relation to the Local Government sector and the requirement to prepare and publish Local Public Health Plans (LPHPs) by 4 June 2026 under Stage 5 of the *Public Health Act 2016*.

WALGA's submission aligns to WALGA [advocacy position 3.2.1 Public Health Act 2016](#) which states that:

The Local Government sector supports the introduction of the Public Health Act 2016 and:

- *Development of a clear implementation plan and timelines for the staged implementation of the Act and subsidiary legislation;*
- *Engagement of Local Government in the development of any supporting regulations;*
- *The provision of funding to support smaller rural and regional councils with the development of local Public Health Plans; and*
- *The development of tool and resources to support the introduction of requirements for Public Health Plans.*

March 2015

Local Governments in Western Australia play a significant role in the protection and enhancement of health and wellbeing within their communities across various responsibilities and functions including urban planning, investment in infrastructure, and creating and sustaining healthy and safe environments. Key to the successful implementation of LPHP, and therefore the State Public Health Plan to which they must align, will be building on and supporting this existing role, expertise, and broad remit of responsibilities.

As at October 2023, 40 Local Governments (29%) had a current public health plan available on their websites. The remaining 99 Local Governments (71%) had expired, in development or no public health plan.¹

3. State Plan Objectives

WALGA considers that the revised objectives, under the more focused headings of Promote, Prevent, Protect and Enable, makes the strategic direction of the State Public Health Plan (State Plan) clearer. The high-level structure provides the space for Local Governments to develop LPHPs that are innovative and flexible to their community needs.

WALGA supports the reframing of the existing objective to 'Improve Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing' as a crosscutting objective, reflective of current approaches to ensuring Aboriginal empowerment. It is essential that the elevation of this objective be accompanied by a sustained State Government commitment to the provision of resources that empower Aboriginal controlled organisations and improve cultural competence across services.

WALGA considers both the 'Improve Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing' and the 'Equity and Inclusion' objectives as principle-based objectives that underpin the remaining four objectives. WALGA recommends that the 'Equity and Inclusion' objective be raised to the top of the diagram, alongside the 'Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing' objective.

WALGA recommends the corresponding alignment documents section under the 'Equity and Inclusion' objective include a range of State and Federal strategic documents that set Government direction around supporting vulnerable cohorts. This includes, but is not limited to, people living with disability, multicultural or migrant communities and those exiting the justice system.

Recommendations:

That the overarching objective of Equity and Inclusion be repositioned to the top of the diagram to reflect its importance across all other objectives.

That the alignment section for the Equity and Inclusion objective include a comprehensive range of State and Federal strategic documents that set Government priorities around supporting vulnerable cohorts.

4. State Plan Priorities and Alignments

WALGA notes that the priorities remain largely unchanged from the 2019-2024 State Plan. This provides consistency of messaging and positioning for Local Governments

¹ 1. Frith Klug, Sharonna Mossenson, Claire Pulker, Clare Whitton, Catrina McStay, Gina Trapp 2024 (under review). Local government commitments to creating healthier food environments: A Western Australian Public Health Plan audit.

particularly those who have already published or are developing LPHPs with time periods beyond the introduction of the new State Plan.

The draft document introduces the two new priorities: 'managing the effects of climate change on people's health' and 'enhance pandemic preparedness and response to emerging communicable disease threats'.

Managing the effects of climate change on people's health

Local Governments are already responding to climate change and have a range of policies and actions in place to build climate change resilience within their communities. Key to the successful inclusion of this new priority will be clarity of scope and expectations for both the State and local public health plans. A wider range of alignment documents would support this endeavour. In addition, a recognition and commitment to the required capacity building and funding will be required.

Recommendation:

State Government invest significantly in supporting the scope and implementation of the new 'managing the effects of climate change on people's health' priority.

Enhance pandemic preparedness and response to emerging communicable disease threats

Local Government played an essential role in supporting their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. WALGA welcomes the inclusion of this priority to ensure future pandemic events are better prepared for.

Recommendation:

Further work is undertaken to contextualise the State Government expectations and scope of the pandemic preparedness priority, that builds on the lessons learnt from the 2019 -2022 period.

Priority alignments

WALGA notes that the alignment section relating to the State Plan priorities aims to provide the wider context and whole-of-Government strategic direction as they relate and intersect with public health. This is a useful tool for Local Governments considering the State Public Health Plan when developing LPHPs.

To ensure this section is fully utilised and reinforces the overarching principles of 'Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing' and 'Equity and Inclusion', WALGA recommends that further work is undertaken to ensure this section comprehensively incorporates reference to relevant Australian and State Government strategic documents.

For example, the alignment documents relating to 'provide sustainable disaster and emergency management' fail to mention the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience and National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2021-31*. This strategic document also includes reference to the importance of including people living with disability, reinforcing the overarching principle objective of 'Equity and Inclusion.'

The alignment documents relating to 'Equity and Inclusion' are currently focused on Aboriginal Health documents. This approach fails to make the connection to other disadvantaged cohorts as they are presented in documents such as the State Disability Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

Recommendation:

Further work is undertaken to ensure the alignment section comprehensively incorporates reference to relevant Australian and State Government strategic documents.

5. Other Considerations

Local Governments are required to consider the State Public Health Plan in the development of their LPHPs. Including specific actions the State Government will undertake to achieve the priorities and a commitment to resource those actions will provide much needed clarity on the expectation of LPHPs.

Recommendation:

The Department of Health set specific actions under the State Plan and commits to appropriate resourcing.

It is essential that Local Governments' varying levels of expertise, capacity, capability and local characteristics are recognised, understood and addressed through the provision of appropriate support and resources.

This includes equitable access to support from Health Service Providers and Population Health Units across the Department of Health and WA Country Health Service (WACHS) and establishing funding mechanisms for external support for Local Governments in their preparation of LPHPs. This is particularly relevant for smaller regional and remote Local Governments. It should be noted that for many in the sector this will be a new requirement that necessitates staffing, financial and expertise that may be beyond current levels.

Recommendations:

The Department of Health continues to engage with the Local Government sector on the development of documents and support relating to Local Public Health Plans.

That State Government commits to investing in the preparation and implementation of Local Public Health Plans through additional funding.

State Government ensure equitable access to support and guidance for Local Governments through prioritise recruitment and resources to Population Health Units across the Department of Health and WACHS, especially in non-metro regions.

6. Conclusion

WALGA thanks the Department of Health for the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the Western Australian Local Government sector. WALGA will continue to work with the WA Department of Health to ensure State and local public health plans provide a positive mechanism to increase public health outcomes for communities across Western Australia.

Local Governments in Western Australia play a significant role in the protection and enhancement of health and wellbeing within their communities, which can be built on through the requirements to prepare LPHPs. Ensuring State and Local Public Health Plans are impactful for the diverse communities across Western Australia will require commitment to capacity building and investment across both levels of Government.

WALGA encourages State Government to continue to engage with the Local Government sector throughout the development of the State Plan, Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government and other resources and support.

For enquiries on this Submission please contact Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy, on hgodsave@walga.asn.au or 9213 2074.