



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

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New National Health Committee appointed

The Commonwealth Government today announced appointments to the National Health Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council for the next three years, from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2009.

The newly-appointed committee will be chaired by Professor Colin Masters from the University of Melbourne. Professor Masters is an expert on Alzheimer's disease, mental health, neuroscience and pathology.

The National Health Committee provides independent evidence-based health advice, guidelines and standards to governments and the community. It will focus on population health issues in areas such as health promotion and illness prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, health services and systems, and the quality and safety of care.

The membership of the committee incorporates a diverse range of expertise including, mental health, Indigenous health, chronic diseases, infectious diseases, nutrition, health care health economics, consumer participation in health, and health policy.

Two of the 11 members have expertise in Indigenous health and research —Dr Mark Wenitong and Ms Terry Dunbar. Dr Harvey Whiteford's appointment to the committee will bring a wealth of experience on mental health issues.

I look forward to the National Health Committee working with the community, health professionals and governments in making a significant and expert contribution to the nation's health.

Details of appointees are attached.

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NATIONAL HEALTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Professor Colin MASTERS (Chairman) has held many senior scientific research positions, mainly in the area of Alzheimer's disease. His current appointments include Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne, chief of neuropathology and chair of the Senior Scientists Council at the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria, consultant in pathology at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and chief scientific advisor for Neuroscience Australia.

Dr Kathryn ANTIOCH is a health economist with national and international qualifications and experience in reviewing health services; assessing, analysing and improving funding models; adjusting risks in financing health services and translating economic and clinical evidence into clinical practice. She has been a member of various Australian and international health economics societies and associations, conference committees, working groups and research committees, and was a member of the Health Advisory Committee in the 2003 to 2006 triennium.

Dr Katrine BAGHURST currently works as a consultant for government and the nutrition industry after an extensive career with the CSIRO. She was the senior principal research scientist and program manager of the Social Nutrition and Epidemiology Program, the Consumer Research Program and the Consumer Science Program. She has represented her interests and experience in the field of nutrition as a member of numerous health committees over the last 25 years, one of which was the Health Advisory Committee of the NHMRC in its most recent triennium.

Dr John CARNIE is the deputy chief health officer for Human Services Victoria. Prior to this he held the position of director Disease Control & Research of the same department. He has expertise and experience in a range of public health issues including emerging community risks, pandemics, communicable diseases, biotechnology and ethics. He has been a member of numerous public health, scientific and research advisory committees and is a Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Dr Jon CURRIE is a neurologist and director of Drug & Alcohol Services for Sydney West Area Health Service. He has an interest in the neurobiology of addiction, as well as the acute and chronic effects of alcohol and other drugs on brain function. He has been involved with numerous councils, advisory committees and steering committees within NSW relating to the treatment and management of drug and alcohol issues.

Ms Terry DUNBAR is an Associate Professor and Research Fellow with the Faculty of Education, Health and Science of the Charles Darwin University. She has been a consultant with OASTIH, and the director of Development with the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health and has expertise in the areas of action research, ethics, indigenous health and indigenous health research. Ms Dunbar was a member of the NHMRC's Australian Health Ethics Committee in the 2003-2006 triennium.

Ms Rebecca JAMES is the acting chief executive officer of the Victorian Office of Research Australia. She has extensive experience working within government as an advisor on Medicare and public health, and has additional experience in health policy, indigenous health, medical workforce and medical research. She has been a member of various boards and advisory committees on health services and health policy. her academic background includes economics and public policy.

Dr Anne JOHNSON is the deputy head of the Department of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences at Flinders University. She has research and teaching interests in health promotion, consumer participation in health services and health systems, organisational change to reorient health services, and intersectoral collaboration. She is a member of numerous health promotion, consumer advocacy and professional associations.

Dr Mark WENTONG is a general practitioner and administrator with the Wuchopperen Aboriginal Medical Service in Cairns, as well as working with various Indigenous men's groups and the David Wirrpunda Foundation for Aboriginal children. He is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Molecular Sciences at James Cook University and the president of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association. He maintains a strong involvement in policy making and is a member of several national health committees, including the Health Advisory Committee in its 2003-2006 triennium.

Professor Harvey WHITEFORD is a Professor of Psychiatry and Population Health at the University of Queensland, and the director of Policy and Economics Group at the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research. He is a mental health advisor to the Commonwealth Government, and has worked with the World Bank, WHO and national governments in the development of mental health programs. He is interested in how best to plan, fund and deliver efficient and effective mental health services.

Dr Helen ZORBAS is currently the director of the National Breast Cancer Centre and a staff specialist at the Rachel Foster Breast Clinic, RPAH. She has frequently presented at national and international conferences in the areas of service delivery, cancer screening, and creating and improving partnerships in the management of breast cancer – particularly for those living in rural and remote areas. She has been a member of a variety of working parties and advisory committees, and was on the Health Advisory Committee in the 2003-2006 triennium.