

AUSTRALIAN  
**PUBLIC HEALTH  
CONSULTANTS**  
NETWORK

21 February 2020

Public Health Association of Australia  
PO Box 319  
CURTIN ACT 2605

**Attention: Policy Team**

**Re. PHAA Strategic Plan renewal**

On behalf of the Australian Public Health Consultants Network, we wish to commend the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) for consulting with their members on the refresh of the 2017 Strategic Plan; we are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback.

It is pleasing to see that PHAA acknowledge the need to adapt to changing circumstances in the sphere in which they operate. We strongly encourage PHAA to respond to the changing nature of work in the next strategic plan. We are living in an era of entrepreneurship, small business and start-ups, and the public health workforce is changing. Self-employed workers— consultants, contractors, business owners, freelancers – are an important segment of the public health workforce.

In Australia:

- 3.7 million people are freelancing – 30% of the total workforce.
- Freelancers contribute an estimated \$51 billion annually in freelance earnings to the economy.
- Lots of people aspire to freelance. Of those who don't own their own business, one in six (17%) consider it a goal they would like to accomplish.
- 19% juggle freelancing with a full-time traditional job ('moonlighting')<sup>1</sup>.

**Australian Public Health Consultants Network**

The Australian Public Health Consultants Network is a national network of independent, self-employed consultants. The network connects and supports consultants working in public health, and fosters a positive workforce culture based on collaboration rather than competition. Founded in 2016 by two self-employed consultants Rebecca Zosel and Kristy Schirmer who run the group pro bono, the network currently has 56 members from across Australia, and over 150 newsletter subscribers. The vast majority of network members are PHAA members.

<sup>1</sup> National Australia Bank 2017, *Rethink Success: Australians' views of success today – Chapter 3 Working for success in the digital age*, <https://business.nab.com.au/rethink-success-australias-view-success-today-22468/>

**Strategic Plan feedback:**

The Australian Public Health Consultants Network recommends a focus on providing leadership and supporting self-employed workers as an important and growing segment of the public health workforce. This focus may include, but is not limited to:

- Conduct a membership survey to collect data and build knowledge on the Australian public health workforce and the number of current and aspiring consultants.
- Workforce development to build entrepreneurial capacity.
- Support to build capacity of consultants through ongoing professional development and networking via PHAA.
- Establishment of a sustainable networking group for consultants (e.g. PHAA Special Interest Group, or group similar to the Students and Young Professionals in Public Health Group). This may involve transitioning this network into PHAA structures.
- Exploring the role of consultants as independent advocates and spokespersons for public health policy issues.
- Support self-employed consultants to maintain workplace protections.
- Exploring the role of PHAA as a broker between agencies (purchasers) to self-employed consultants.

With the trend towards freelancing set for continued growth, a focus on self-employed workers will position PHAA as leaders in the new work order, and translate into benefits for both the association and its members.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on the refresh of the PHAA Strategic Plan. We look forward to contributing further over time.

Regards



**Rebecca Zosel**



**Kristy Schirmer**

**Co-Founders, Australian Public Health Consultants Network**

Email: [austpublichealthconsultants@gmail.com](mailto:austpublichealthconsultants@gmail.com)