

People's Health Movement - Australia (PHM-OZ)

Fran Baum (PHM-OZ)

Short history

The People's Health Movement - Australia was started after a number of Australian public and community health activists attended the First People's Health Assembly in Savar Bangladesh. These members included David Legge, Fran Baum, Frank Tesoriero, and others. Support to attend the PHA was provided by the Public Health Association of Australia to one Australian.

The PHA1 was an amazingly powerful mobilising force for all those who attended and we return inspired by the global movement and the wonderful words and spirit of the People's Health Charter.

Australia is a small country in terms of population – in 2016 22 million but it is massive in geographical area. Politically we are Federation organised in to six states and two territories.

Most of those who attended PHA1 were members of the Public Health Association of Australia. At the time Fran Baum was National President of the Association and most of us were active in the Political Economy of Health Special Interest Group (PEHSIG). WE developed two strategies for PHM immediately after PHA1:

1. Work through the existing Public Health Association and especially the PEHSIG and so we meet annual with the PEHSIG and discussion current issues concerning health
2. Hold state based meetings. This strategy has been most successful in Melbourne Victoria where David Legge has developed and led a group that has met regularly. IN South Australia the meetings have been sporadic and often linked to visiting PHM comrades from overseas.
3. We are a loose network without any membership structure. We have other organisations who have very loosely affiliated but this means little in substance other than the link with PHAA.

We have also developed a website (http://phmoz.org/wiki/index.php?title=People%27s_Health_Movement_Australia) and Facebook page. These have been helpful but updating them has proved to be a challenge and doesn't happen as often as we'd like.

Successful strategies for PHM-OZ have been:

- *Monthly meetings as held in Victoria*
- *Hosting overseas PHM activists:* Hani Serag the then global co-ordinator, David Sanders (Member Global Steering Council) have visited Adelaide and inspired local PHM activists
- *Australian Launches of Global Health Watches:* have proved a good way to engage people – have been held in Perth, Alice Springs and Adelaide
- *Running specific campaigns:* Most notably our campaign against the Trans Pacific

Partnership led by Deb Gleeson has been very successful. This campaign was fully supported by the PHAA.

- *Ensuring there are PHM-OZ activists at each People’s Health Assembly:* PHM-OZ members attended Savar (2000) Cuenca (2005) Cape Town (2012). Each event was inspiring and helped energy for our local movement.
- *Preparing a booklet of activists stories from South Australia to take to Cuenca in 2005* – the collecting of the stories and distribution helped explain what health activism is and what different forms it can take
- *Recruiting students to work on projects as part of their course* – reinforces their existing progressive position.
- *Forming networks with other organisations* – examples are: PHAA, Health and Human Rights Group at Flinders University, etc.

Challenges for PHM-OZ

Membership or not?

We have a range of views about whether PHM-OZ should move to a membership model. The pros and cons are as follows:

PHA as Membership organisation in Australia	
Pros	Cons
Would make it easier to recruit people to PHM. People always ask “how do I joint?”.	Would make us less open as a network
Would enable us to collect memberships for local events but also for a solidarity payment to the global secretariat	Membership fees would be prohibitive for some
Being an incorporated organisation would enable us to apply for an run projects	

Global or Local focus?

Key members of PHM-OZ have been central in the global management structure and projects of PHM-Global – this has meant that local organising has suffered

Key lessons from PHM-OZ

1. Global health Assemblies are very inspiring and really keep people’s energy going
2. Regular meetings are really good
3. Linking with link-minded organisations and forming a network of progressive health and social determinants of health is supportive
4. Find some young people who can keep your website and social media current