



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

RF:LLS

Wednesday, 29 September 2004

Professor Kwong Lee Dow
Vice Chancellor
The University of Melbourne

Dear Professor Lee Dow

Re: Proposal to Establish Chair of Social Research in Alcohol

At its meeting on 30th September 2004 the of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences Board Committee will be requested to approve on behalf of Faculty a proposal to establish a Chair of Social Research in Alcohol within the School of Population Health.

The details of the proposal are attached.

We would appreciate this item being submitted to the Planning and Budget Committee for approval, subject to formal approval by Faculty Board.

Yours sincerely

fr
Richard Frampton
General Manager

cc Ms J Mariani, Secretary, Planning & Budget Committee

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**SCHOOL OF POPULATION HEALTH
FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A
CHAIR OF SOCIAL RESEARCH IN ALCOHOL**

BACKGROUND

The School of Population Health (SPH) was established in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences in 2001. The School aims to strengthen the understanding, capacity and services of society to meet population health needs and to improve the quality and equity of health care. It employs a population health framework that incorporates public health and preventative medicine, health promotion, clinical medicine and allied healthcare disciplines and an evidence-based approach to health policy and health care. SPH places particular emphasis on indigenous and international health. Its research programs aim to elucidate the genetic, environmental, social and economic determinants of health, and also focus on the evaluation of the health systems and policies, programs and services that seek to prevent disease and injury and to promote health. The School provides research and professional development opportunities for medical undergraduates, postgraduates in a wide range of disciplines, clinicians in all sectors of the health care industry, scientists, professionals and leaders in population health.

The School is comprised of 10 entities: 5 Centres, 4 Units and 1 research group affiliated with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI). Seven of these entities were existing Faculty or Department Centres or units that were brought together under the School umbrella at the time of its establishment. The Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre (DVDC) was established in 2003, and the VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Social Wellbeing was established in 2004. Located at 207 Bouverie Street is the Centre for the Study of Health and Society, the Program Evaluation Unit (incorporating the Health Economics Group), Centre for International Mental Health, Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre and the VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Social Wellbeing. Located at 723 Swanston Street is the Centre for Genetic Epidemiology and the Epidemiology and Biostatistics Unit. The Key Centre for Women's Health in Society is located at the Royal Woman's Hospital and the Sexual Health Unit is housed within Melbourne Sexual Health Centre nearby on Swanston Street. The MCRI Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group is located at 207 Bouverie Street.

Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Inc is formally affiliated with Melbourne University, and is located adjacent to St Vincent's Hospital in Gertrude St, Fitzroy. Turning Point's Foundation Professor and Director was Professor Margaret Hamilton. Professor Nick Crofts has recently been appointed Director following Professor Hamilton's retirement from that position. Turning Point has close links with both the School of Population Health and the School of Behavioural Sciences. Subjects on drug and alcohol issues available within the School of Population Health Master of Public Health degree are taught by Turning Point staff who have honorary appointments to the University. Doctoral students based at Turning Point are enrolled through the University and are jointly supervised by University staff and Turning Point staff with honorary University appointments. Turning Point also has close links to the Department of Medicine (St Vincent's Hospital), particularly through the recently retired Professor Greg Whelan.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed to establish the Chair of Social Research in Alcohol, for five years in the first instance, in the School of Population Health. The Professor of Social Research in Alcohol will be principally located at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, and also at the School of Population Health Centre for the Study of Health and Society (a joint Centre with the Faculty of Arts). The VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit within the Centre for the Study of Health and Society has a particular research interest in alcohol social policy and indigenous health.

ACADEMIC CASE

Concern about drugs has dominated public health, justice and law enforcement and political worlds for the past decade. During this time, most attention has been paid to illicit drugs including heroin, amphetamines, cannabis and, more recently, *ecstasy* and related drugs.

At the same time, a determined and focussed research program attending to the harms associated with tobacco for both the individual smoker and those in the immediate vicinity as well as the recognition of the cost of tobacco to the community, including direct health costs, loss of productivity and premature death, has meant that Australia has been a world leader in research and the development of interventions with regard to public health tobacco concerns; most recently playing a significant role in developing and supporting the passage of the first United Nations Framework on tobacco.

Through the activities of leaders at St. Vincent's Hospital in conjunction with the University of Melbourne's Medical Faculty Clinical School, Victoria was recognised as the lead State in the development of a specialist clinical and research unit focussed on the study of and response to alcohol-related problems in the community from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s.

While this early work was focussed especially on the identification of alcohol-related illness, its recognition, diagnosis and treatment, significant early effort was expended on building the profile of alcohol-related population data and the study of links with matters of safety such as research on blood alcohol concentration and its relationship to a diminished capacity to drive.

Subsequent support for the Coordinator of Alcohol and Drug Education in Medical Schools (CADEMS) programme during the late 1980s and early 1990s provided a platform for the development and growth of the Drug and Alcohol Research Team (DART) within the Faculty's (then) Department of Community Medicine. This in turn led the University of Melbourne to be an important agent in the establishment of *Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre* that is now formally affiliated with the University. Turning Point's Director is a Professorial Associate of the University. Margaret Hamilton, then Head of DART, was appointed as Turning Point's first Professor and Director to develop the organisation, its clinical, research and education and training programme. She has recently been succeeded by Professor Nick Crofts.

A consistent link has been maintained with St. Vincent's Hospital through this period with significant shared activity in teaching and supervision, in both the academic and clinical domains through Professor Greg Whelan.

At this time, the Australian and international community is again particularly concerned about alcohol related problems. Attention is especially on vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples and youth drinking patterns and associated behaviours. The alcohol related harm associated with these sub-groups must be studied and understood in the context of the historic, economic, social and cultural place of alcohol in the community more broadly.

It is timely to build a substantial program of public health research focussed on alcohol including postgraduate teaching, policy analysis and advocacy grounded in social research on alcohol.

In summary, the Professor of Social Research in Alcohol will:

- provide scholarly leadership in the development of an academic program focussed on the public health and safety aspects of alcohol availability, promotion and consumption
- provide leadership and excellence in the examination of public policies that influence the extent, impact and consequences of alcohol and other drug use in the community
- have achieved distinction and recognition at an international level for their research in this area.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential

- A high level of personal commitment to, and achievement in, scholarship and practice related to the study of the social place and impact of alcohol in the community.
- High levels of international recognition as a leader in the analysis and development of alcohol and drug related public policy.
- Extensive involvement in international and national health research and policy development
- Experience in the provision of high level advice to government and other bodies regarding population level responses to alcohol
- Formal qualifications with a doctorate in a social or health related discipline and broad experience in the alcohol and drug field
- Outstanding record of research publications
- An outstanding record of achievement in gaining support, including competitive research grants

FUNDING, STAFF AND RESOURCES

Funding of the Chair will be provided by a grant from the Victorian Government's Department of Human Services for 5 years in the first instance as part of a major initiative by the Government on alcohol.

The Alcohol Education and Research Foundation will provide 5 years of research program funding support in excess of \$1 million to be used for staff and projects. The research program to be directed by the Professor will be known as the AER Foundation Program in Alcohol Policy Research. This grant will be provided directly to Turning Point.

Turning Point will provide research and office space and facilities to the Professor and to the research group.

PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENT

An international search and appointment process using standard University of Melbourne procedures will be conducted to identify a suitable individual to fill the Chair.

September 14th 2004

*Professor Terry Nolan
Head, School of Population Health*
