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**Populism and Public Health**

Patrick Tobin, Director, Policy and Advocacy

6 May 2019



# So what are the implications for:

- The College?
- AFPHM?
- You as public health practitioners?
- **Advocacy v's activism continuum...**
- Where does the College sit???
- Where do you sit???



**Healthy housing**



**Good work**



**Whānau wellbeing**

**#MakeItTheNorm**



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The RACP plays an active role in election campaigns on both sides of the Tasman by advocating for policies explicitly designed to improve health outcomes for our communities.

As part of its 2019 Australian election campaign, the College has developed the [Australian Government Election Statement 2019](#).

The Statement sets out key recommendations for future-proofing the Australian healthcare system, organised into the three priority areas of **sustainability, prevention and equity**. The recommendations included in the Statement form a virtuous circle: they work to reinforce each other and amplify the overall benefits to the healthcare system and the community.

## Make your voice heard

RACP has prepared a suite of materials to support member advocacy. These include letters which can be used to write to your local Member of Parliament or to your local newspaper, media champion kits, and fact sheets on key priorities.

These focus on RACP priority policy issues that clearly demonstrate the need for sustainability, prevention and equity and that will deliver much needed health and

# RACP Australian Government Election Statement May 2019



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Future-proofing the healthcare system -  
promoting sustainability, prevention  
and equity

Australian Government Election Statement 2019

# Obesity: RACP Recommendations



- Implement an effective **sugar tax** on sugar-sweetened beverages
- Implement a national strategy on obesity
- Establish a national taskforce
- Securing long term funding for evidence-based prevention measures
- Allocating funding to comprehensive and consistent national guidelines





## Obesity: RACP Recommendations continued

- Deliver equitable access to bariatric surgery for public hospital patients
- Introduce advertising and marketing regulations and restrictions
- Revise the Health Star Rating system to give stronger weight to sugar content - **make it mandatory**

**OBESITY**



# Climate Change: RACP Recommendations

- Continue to pursue efforts towards targets for cutting emissions agreed in the Paris Accord
- Developing a national climate change and health strategy for Australia
- Implementing rigorous domestic policies to address the adverse health effects of climate change and realise the health co-benefits
- Establishing a national healthcare sustainable development unit. The first tasks of the unit would be to:
  - consult with stakeholders
  - establish appropriate metrics and measure the total carbon footprint of the health sector in Australia
  - work with health stakeholders to develop an environmental sustainability strategy and
  - support health services to implement the strategy







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# Indigenous Child Health - Inequities

## Child Health Outcomes:

- Addressing indigenous child health inequities as a priority
- Consult with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector and RACP specialists to reduce child health inequities

## Sexually transmitted infections:

- Reciprocal funding to fund specialist services
- Fund STI Tests in remote areas
- Accessible adolescent sexual and reproductive health services
- Bulk-bill STI screening for children & young people
- Work with states & territories to ensure access to sexual education programs

# What is good advocacy?

- Understands *moral case/facts* are not enough
- Grounded in a broad *vision* to progress a *goal*
- Identifies the *problem and solution*
- Focused on *outcomes* rather than outputs
- Understanding of *key players* incl. *allies* and *opponents*
- Taps into relevant *environmental intelligence*
- Organise to be *proactive* and ready to be *responsive* when opportunities arise
- Based on good *evidence* but *framed* and communicated in a way that connects/engages/motivates
- Identifies and manages *risks* and *trade-offs*



# Key advocacy questions

- What do you want?
- Who can make it happen?
- What do they need to hear?
- Who do they need to hear it from?
- How can we make sure they hear it?
- What do we have (to support our position/request)?
- What do we need (what's missing)?
- How do we begin to take action?
- How can we tell if it's working?

Unicef Advocacy Toolkit, 2014 [https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf)

# Advocacy includes...

- Activities aimed at bringing about change
  - Planning
  - Research
  - Letters
  - Meetings
  - Media
  - Conversations
  - Submissions
  - Campaigns
  - Relationships
  - Partnering
- Good advocacy is about doing this in a structured, systematic way
  - But there are other important concepts.....



# What is Framing?

“Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality—and sometimes to create what we take to be reality.

They structure our ideas and concepts, they shape how we reason, and they even impact how we perceive and how we act.

For the most part, our use of frames is unconscious and automatic—we use them without realizing it.”

**George Lakoff**





- Have the populists won this battle?
- Exactly the same proposal...
  - seen in 2 very different ways

# *Carbon Tax* not an *environmental measure*

## - values and frames



Along comes a carbon tax. It wasn't a carbon tax, as you know. It was many other things in nomenclature terms but we made it a carbon tax. We made it a fight about the hip pocket and not about the environment. That was brutal retail politics and it took Abbott about six months to cut through and when he cut through, Gillard was gone.



# ***Carbon Tax** not an **environmental measure***

## **- values and frames**

“Along comes a carbon tax. It wasn’t a carbon tax, as you know. It was many other things in nomenclature terms but we made it a carbon tax. **We made it a fight about the hip pocket and not about the environment.**

**That was brutal retail politics** and it took Abbott about six months to cut through and when he cut through, Gillard was gone.”

# Developing an Advocacy strategy

- Consider what will be the most effective approach
  - **Behind the scenes....**

Often used when there are strong agendas, relationships you don't want to damage, when expert opinion might not be the 'popular' opinion, or you want to enable a low-key back-down
  - **Educative....**

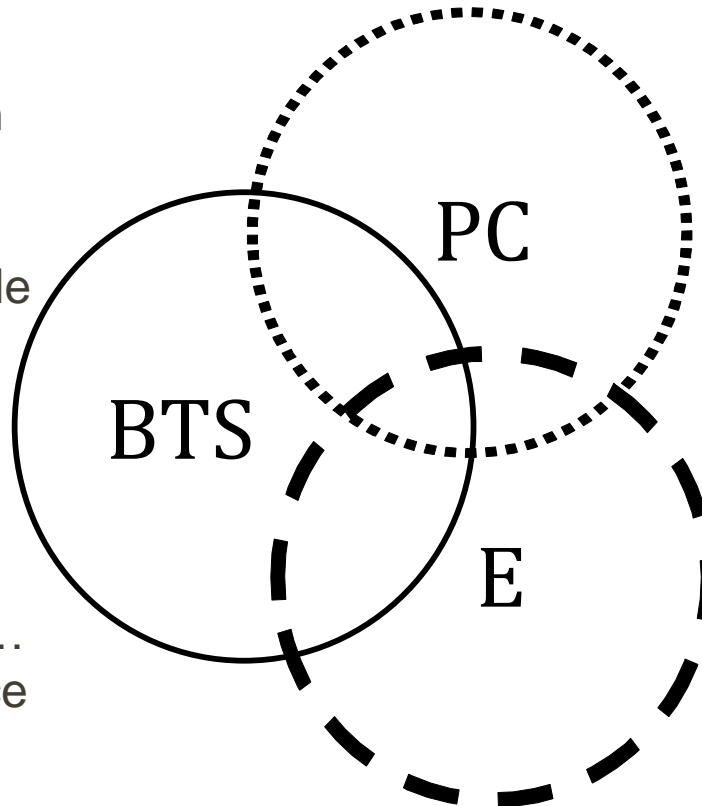
Effective when you're looking to build momentum, create a groundswell, shaping discussions
  - **Public campaign....**

Helps to raise awareness of an issue, often involves emotive topics where people feel strongly, pro-active use of media & champions

# Determining your approach

## Behind the Scenes

- Meetings with decision makers and their advisors
- Getting seat at the table
- Engage allies
- Work around or minimise opposition
- Submissions, consultations, roundtables, inquiries...
- Formal correspondence to decision-makers & influencers



## Public campaign

- Media & social media
- Opinion pieces
- Launches
- Commissioned reports
- Support others initiatives that align with College
- High profile champions & messengers
- Factsheets
- Curated resources
- Website
- Training curricula & resources

## Educative

- Initiatives & products to engage and educate members
- CPD for members

# Are you **negative** or **positive**?

- **Negative** can be easier and quick (sometimes very quick) – using the Parliamentary processes
- **Positive** is hard, often complex and takes time – often a very, very long time. Work with **both** Parliament and Departments
- Whether you are **+ve** or **-ve**, you should always talk to the Department(s) as well as the politicians – preferably before the politicians as they will be briefing the politicians



# Key People – relationships

## - political level

- Who are they and what are their motivations?
  - Personality and personal circumstances often more important than formal political affiliation
  - Personal world views - **1<sup>st</sup> speech mandatory reading** before you see any politician
  - Career stage - seek re-election or retiring
  - Ambition - personal or policy oriented?
  - Stage in political cycle - how close is next election?
  - Political staff very important - loyal to their immediate boss
    - Remember all are thinking they will only be in their jobs for 2-3 years max

# Key people relationships contd

## – public service

- Senior Officials
- Longer timeframes
- Public service ethos
- Subject matter experts - especially lower down
- Risk averse
- Medical officers - make them your best friends!!
  - They understand Drs and can provide advocacy and strategy suggestions

# How to engage?

- Letters, submissions
- **FACE to FACE**
- Senate inquiries
- Senate Estimates
- Expert Committee memberships
  
- Role of allies, partnerships in the same space

# SWOT Analysis - *Doctors as Advocates*

## STRENGTHS

- Expert clinical and subject knowledge
- Giving up clinical time to advocate for an issue – shows your commitment

## WEAKNESSES

- Inexperience / lack of knowledge of political process
- Too engaged with detailed clinical issues vs big picture

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Health issues always top of agenda for society and individuals
- At the individual level – doctors are always respected

## THREATS

- Getting sucked in to partisan politics
- Advocacy overreach – where is the line?
- Balance between advocacy & clinical work



# **We don't always lose**

## **Some recent battle stories...**

# Making Change

## Welfare reform:

- Blocking proposed reforms to the disability support pension
- Removal of mandatory drug testing of welfare recipients



*"I met with The RACP, who took me to the issues pertaining to this disallowance. They argued strongly that we should oppose this proposition, and that we should seek disallowance"*

*(Welfare Reform)  
Senator Doug Cameron*



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# Making Change

## Codeine up scheduling:


- RACP instrumental in supporting the TGA's decision on up scheduling
- The RACP bought together a coalition of medical and consumer organisations to counter the Pharmacy Guild's attempts to undermine up-scheduling
- Health Minister referenced RACP multiple times

"The change has widespread support from the medical sector including... the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and consumer groups."

Greg Hunt  
Australian Federal Health  
Minister

OCTOBER 27 2017 SAVE PRINT LICENSE ARTICLE

### Pharmacy Guild backs down on codeine changes, Health Minister says


 Esther Han ✉ + + +

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Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt is standing firm on new rules banning over-the-counter codeine products, in defiance of some party room colleagues, state counterparts and the vocal pharmacy lobby.

He revealed the Pharmacy Guild, which has been lobbying heavily for exemptions so that some codeine products can be easily accessible to some patients, had "reversed its position" in its fight to water down the new regulations.

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Pete Aven & Diane Burley

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# Ending NT Open Speed Zones

January 2014



Open speed limit expanded in Northern Territory

November 2015

NEWS



LOCATION:

Sydney, NSW Change

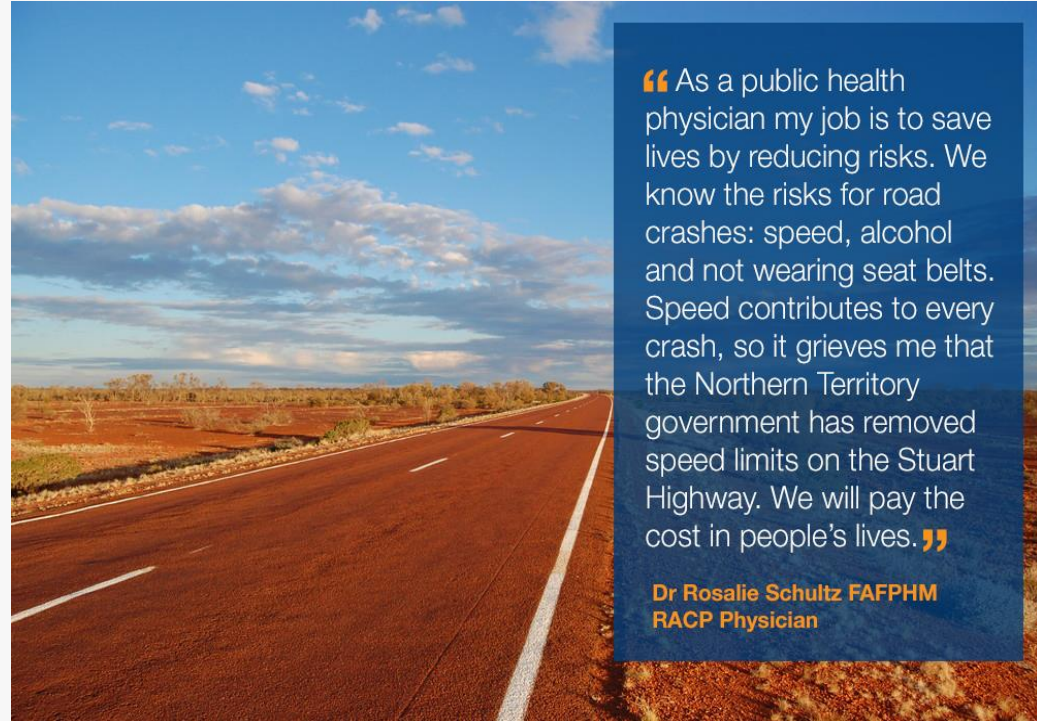
Northern Territory doctors call for end of open speed limits on road victim remembrance day

June 2016

RACP+RACS+ACEM video: targeted social media push; letters to politicians; NT election statement

August 2016

New govt announced end to policy



“As a public health physician my job is to save lives by reducing risks. We know the risks for road crashes: speed, alcohol and not wearing seat belts. Speed contributes to every crash, so it grieves me that the Northern Territory government has removed speed limits on the Stuart Highway. We will pay the cost in people’s lives.”

Dr Rosalie Schultz FAFPHM  
RACP Physician

*“We have made that decision for safety, on the basis of advice from doctors”*

**NT Chief Minister, Michael Gunner**



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# #KidsOffNaru

## Media Release



Thursday, 18 October 2018

### **Legal profession calls for immediate removal of asylum seeker children from Nauru**

The Australian legal profession has today called for asylum seeker children and their families to be moved off Nauru as a matter of urgency.

**Law Council of Australia President, Morry Bailes, said its concerns echoed those of the medical profession, where respected bodies such as the Australian Medical Association, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians and The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners have raised alarm over the welfare of refugee and asylum seeker children held on Nauru.**



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# #KidsOffNauru - Media



**Maria Crotty** @mariacrotty15 · 8 Oct 2018

In Rehab and Geriatrics we regularly see the power of hope and the impact of environment on outcomes in older adults. Lets get 91 [#KidsOffNauru](#)  
[#racp](#) [#AustralianMedicalAssociation](#) [#doctorsforasylumseekers](#)



18

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**The RACP** @TheRACP · 21h

"We know that prolonged immigration detention increases the risk of serious mental health problems for adults and children," Professor David Isaacs, paediatrician and RACP Fellow. [#KidsOffNauru](#)



**Australia under growing pressure over remote detention policy**

Critics brand policy 'failure' that has destroyed lives as children airlifted to Australia for urgent medical treatment.

[aljazeera.com](#)



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**Dr David Issacs, Paediatrician, being interviewed at Parliament House, Canberra**



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# Keep pushing...



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