

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### HEALTH POLICIES MUST BE RELEASED NOW

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is urging all major parties to release their health policies now, so that voters can make properly informed decisions on how the next government will handle health services and public health.

PHAA President Professor Mike Daube said, "So far we have heard little about health from the two major parties. We need to know now – before the leaders' debate and well before the election – how they will treat this issue which literally affects the lives and deaths of all Australians.

"Health is much too important to be left to the tail-end of the election campaign. We spend over \$100 billion a year on our health services – 9.1% of GNP. The community needs to know how health and health services will be delivered and by whom, what resources will be allocated and where, what role health will play in relation to broader issues such as climate change, and how disadvantaged groups will be supported.

"The PHAA is especially concerned to know how the party policies will address the tsunami of preventable death and disease that Australia is facing. More than 60% of adults and a quarter of our kids are overweight or obese; tobacco kills more than 14,000 Australians each year; drinking patterns among young Australians are cause for great concern; and the Aboriginal life expectancy gap shames us all. Do the Labor and Liberal parties support the Greens' call for a levy on alcohol and junk food advertising to fund public education and replace unhealthy sports sponsorship?

"Crucially, we need to know if the parties have policies on health as well as health services – if they are interested in keeping Australians alive and healthy, as well as treating them when they are sick."

Professor Daube concluded, "We urge all parties to release their full health policies now, so that there can be a proper debate on all aspects of health. The leaders' debate should include a major focus on health; and the community must have a proper opportunity to scrutinise the full party policies, rather than having to rely on some last minute slogans."

**For further information/comment:**

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