

5 May 2009

## PREVENTION A WINNER IN ACT BUDGET

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the ACT Government's strong focus on preventive health in today's budget. \$11 million has been allocated over 3 years to address issues such as childhood obesity, high rates of tobacco use among Indigenous Australians, adolescent health and promoting healthy workplaces.

"Traditionally measures to improve public health and prevent illness over the longer term don't receive much attention in Australia, usually receiving under 2% of recurrent expenditure for health as a whole. The new spending on preventive health measures announced by the ACT Government today will go some way towards shifting the focus back to preventing the health problems that see many people seeking treatment for a range of illnesses over the longer term," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the PHAA.

"\$2 million has been allocated specifically for the new *Healthy kids, healthy future* initiative, which will promote physical activity, healthy eating and increased rates of breast feeding. This initiative is complemented by additional expenditure on a range of other preventive measures including workplace health promotion programs and a new Chlamydia awareness campaign. \$4.2 million over 4 years has been allocated for the enhanced management of chronic diseases to ensure that people achieve better health outcomes and there's an additional \$3.5 million over 4 years for a new public mammography service.

"An investment of \$90 million in e-health capacity and infrastructure will support the provision of a range of preventive health services by health professionals in the ACT. An increased focus on health promotion, prevention and early intervention in mental health service provision is also particularly praiseworthy.

"PHAA strongly supports the ACT Government's move to introduce 18 months of paid maternity leave for the Territory's public servants starting on 1 July this year. Women in the ACT public service will be able to take up to 3 years of unpaid leave following the birth of a child and will be able to return to work part time for up to 3 years after maternity leave. It is also pleasing to see the additional 4 weeks leave for mothers accompanied by a doubling of current paternity leave provisions to 2 weeks.

"These provisions are a strong step in the right direction in terms of promoting an appropriate work life balance for public servants in the ACT. We hope that the Australian Government will include a broader national paid parental leave scheme in its budget next week so that workers in all sectors can benefit from a more family friendly working environment," said Mr Moore.

**For further information/comment:**

Michael Moore, CEO of the PHAA

0417 249 731