

BUDGET - LANDMARK SUPPORT FOR PREVENTION

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the Government's response to the National Preventative Health Taskforce report and funding outlined in the Federal Budget as a landmark in action to support prevention.

PHAA President Professor Mike Daube said, "For the first time, we have a comprehensive approach to reducing our massive toll of preventable ill health and death, with substantial commitments in the Budget to funding for prevention".

"The Government's response to the Prevention Taskforce Report demonstrates a strong commitment to action on tobacco, obesity and alcohol problems, with a special focus on binge drinking."

"Today's announcements confirm that the Australian Government will lead the world in tobacco control, through a the 25% tax increase combined with public education, plain packaging and a range of other measures and a special focus on disadvantaged groups who continue to smoke at high levels. This will help to prevent literally hundreds of thousands of deaths.

The allocation of \$50m for action on alcohol, including funds to offer alternatives for sports sponsored by alcohol is also an important development, allied to strong public education programs on both alcohol and obesity. We also welcome the allocation of \$54m to a National Health Survey as well as the substantial funding promised through COAG."

"Of course there are other measures we would like to see accepted – such as alcohol tax reform, and legislated controls on alcohol and junk food promotion, but this is a very encouraging start, and we note that the Government has not closed the door on some of the tough measures proposed in the Taskforce Report."

PHAA CEO Michael Moore said, "We are pleased to see the emphasis on prevention continue, through action ranging from the new Australian National Preventive Health Agency, a new National Health Survey, delivery of the COAG funding, support for community programs, support for primary care (including through the new Medicare Locals) and a significantly increased commitment to participation in sport".

"The Budget's primary healthcare package also contains a number of further measures that are designed to reduce the levels of preventable illness and disease in the Australian community.

It will also be important to ensure that these are complemented by further measures to reduce the health inequities in our society, investment in areas such as mental health and oral health, and action beyond the health portfolio".

Professor Daube said, "Even in difficult economic times, this gives us a strong basis on which to build. We will continue to press for further action, including an increase in the percentage of health expenditure for prevention from the current 2%, but today's announcements clearly mark the start of a new era in prevention."

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