

## **Parties rated on Preventive Health**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has rated the main parties on their preventive health policies.

PHAA is dedicated to promoting prevention and remedying inequalities in health outcomes. The following summary is focused on preventive health and does not address broader health system issues or the overarching priority of climate change, although PHAA is concerned that so little attention has been paid during the campaign to many key areas where great gains for the health of the community could be made.

The Australian Labor Party Platform for health promises “a far greater focus on prevention and well-being”. It includes commitments to action on specific issues such as tobacco, alcohol, obesity, chronic disease, maternal and child health, illicit drug use, community health, dental health, promoting sport and physical activity, medical research and action to close the Aboriginal life expectancy gap. The ALP has made a series of specific commitments on prevention, including establishment of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and plain packaging for tobacco products.

The Greens health policy asserts that “preventative approaches (and, measures to alleviate social disadvantage)... are necessary to address inequities in health outcomes”. They are committed to funding preventive health programs, appropriate screening programs, healthy lifestyle education, legislation to ban junk food advertising on children’s TV, funding for Aboriginal health services to make the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comparable to other Australians, and further specific action on issues including dental health, community and child health, improved labelling and nutritional disclosure, preparation for pandemics, and the health risks of climate change. A discrete policy on alcohol and drugs supports a program for illicit drugs based on harm minimisation, curbs on alcohol promotion, alcohol tax reform and a ban on political donations from the tobacco and alcohol industries. The Greens have also supported establishing a Australian National Preventive Health Agency and plain packaging for tobacco products.

The Liberal Party website provides policies on various aspects of hospital and health services including mental health, regional health and boosting GP services. While PHAA rates them well on mental health commitments there appears to be minimal discussion of prevention and public health. As part of a GP policy they state: “under the Coalition’s plan, there will be more support for after hours care, more preventative healthcare and better chronic disease management”. It is not clear whether the Liberal Party supports establishment of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, and there has been no commitment to acting on plain packaging for tobacco products.

“It is hard to escape the conclusion that the ALP and Greens understand and support prevention, while this vital area of health does not appear to be a priority for the Liberal Party federally. This is especially disappointing, given the level of bipartisan support for important preventive measures over the years, and the strong record of the current WA Liberal government for action on smoking and other issues”, said Professor Mike Daube.

“On the basis of the parties’ policies as presented on their websites, and commitments in relation to the National Preventive Health Agency and plain packaging for tobacco, the Best Buys for prevention nationally are offered by the ALP and Greens. Whatever the outcome, the PHAA is committed to working with the new government to increase the national emphasis on prevention and public health”.

**ENDS**

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