

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Eating Two and Five Adds Up**

Dr Cathy Mead, President of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), has praised the Australian Government for its 'two fruit and five vegetables a day' campaign.

Dr Mead said, "The Australian Government is to be congratulated for developing the 'two and five' campaign. Australians are not eating enough fruit and vegetables, leaving them vulnerable to heart disease, diabetes some cancers and to becoming overweight. This campaign to help all Australians to recognise the need for healthier eating habits is one of a number of measures needed to help reduce obesity and preventable disease."

"The social and economic costs of overweight and obesity alone are high, not only in terms of premature death and health care, but also in terms of disability and a diminished quality of life. In Australia, a conservative estimate of the direct costs of obesity, excluding overweight, is \$464 million, while indirect costs associated with worker absenteeism and premature death are estimated to account for an additional \$272 million," said Dr Mead.

Dr Mark Lawrence, Convenor of the PHAA's Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group said, "The last Nutritional Survey, undertaken in 1995-96 collected data from 13,000 people on how much fruit and vegetables Australians eat. That survey found that children ate less fruit and vegetables than recommended, with around 30 per cent eating no fruit or vegetables on the day before the survey. The survey also showed that 42 per cent of adults did not eat any fruit on the day of the survey."

"This information shows clearly, that children and adults need to increase the number of serves of fruit and vegetables they consume and the Australian Government's campaign to encourage each Australian to eat two serves of fruit and five of vegetables each day is a good step towards improving Australian nutrition and health. In addition the PHAA is looking forward to the release of the second half of this campaign, that focuses on physical activity, later this year, said Dr Lawrence.

"While these large scale campaigns are a great first step, there is a great deal more that needs to be done in this area. In particular, the PHAA would like to see a new national nutrition survey undertaken given that the last was undertaken approximately ten years ago.

There is also a lot of work to be done on identifying successful public health interventions, aimed at reversing the trend of unhealthy weight gain and to identify ways in which to promote weight loss among those who are already overweight. This should include evaluating the effectiveness of this campaign," said Dr Mead.

Dr Mead concluded by saying, "The development of awareness of appropriate nutrition needs to involve different sectors of our society and demands a population focus. The

Australian Government is to be congratulated for recognising this and beginning the difficult task of addressing nutrition for all Australians. I look forward to seeing elements of the broader strategy aimed at the most nutritionally vulnerable in our society - particularly those who are less well off and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

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The Public Health Association is a non-party-political organisation with a membership drawn from more than 40 health-related professions. The Association makes a major contribution to health policy in Australia and has branches in every State and Territory.