

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
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INNOVATIVE IDEAS IN OBESITY REPORT

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the release of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing's Obesity Report, which contains a range of recommendations for action to arrest rising rates of obesity in the community.

"The recommendations cover a broad range of priority areas for action, including specifying a series of actions for Governments as well as those to be undertaken by industry and communities. Tax incentives to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity programs, well-funded public education programs, a focus on worksite programs, and better regulation to ensure that standards are enforced for weight loss products and programs are among some of the important approaches covered in the recommendations," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the PHAA.

"The report recommends that the Treasurer and Minister for Health and Ageing work towards tax incentives to improve the affordability of fresh, healthy food and access to physical activity programs across the nation. Tax incentives would be particularly beneficial for Australians living in rural, regional and remote Australia where freight costs add significantly to the price of fresh foods. Financial incentives to encourage healthy eating and physical activity could make a major contribution to reducing and preventing obesity," said Professor Mike Daube, President of the PHAA.

"The report makes it clear that we need action within tight timelines to ensure better food labelling, curb junk food promotion and drive food reformulation. Industry cooperation will be important, but as the report emphasises, if this is not forthcoming there is an onus on governments to act."

"This Obesity Report is a good step forward. It is important to emphasise the magnitude of the problem and the need for action to prevent rising obesity levels. The report rightly calls for appropriate and equitable treatment services, but bariatric surgery is a last resort and cannot be confused with prevention. It will be vital to ensure that the focus on treatment does not distract us from the reality that obesity is a growing and largely preventable epidemic," said Professor Daube.

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