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PREVENTION REPORT DEMANDS ACTION

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the Federal Government's release of the National Preventative Health Taskforce report, calling for urgent action to improve the health of all Australians.

PHAA President Professor Mike Daube, who is also Deputy Chair of the Taskforce, said: "This is a blueprint for action to save hundreds of thousands of lives. The report is much more than the usual series of recommendations. The strategy set out to reduce our national toll from obesity, tobacco and alcohol is practical and pragmatic, seeking action not only from governments but from all sectors of the community."

"It is time to remove the 'Cinderella' tag from prevention. We know what needs to be done and how it should occur. The targets in the report – reducing daily smoking to under 10%, reducing short-term harmful drinking to 14% and longer term harmful drinking to 7%, halting and reversing the rise in overweight and obesity; and contributing to Closing the Gap – are all feasible by 2020 if there is a genuine national commitment."

"There are enormous benefits from prevention. Halting the rise in obesity alone will save half a million premature deaths by 2020. The action on smoking proposed will prevent the premature deaths of more than 300,000 Australians now alive. And acting on alcohol not only saves lives, but will also save the health system nearly \$2 billion over the next decade. The potential for benefit is staggering."

"The Government is to be applauded for the commitment it has already shown to prevention, through the Taskforce, funding through COAG and facing down drinks industry interests over the alcopops tax."

"There is now an overwhelming case for acting. The evidence is in. We know what needs to be done. We know that the only real opposition will come from commercial interests, but surely the health of the community – and preventing the deaths of nearly one million Australians now alive – is more important than the interests of tobacco companies and other commercial lobby groups."

PHAA CEO Michael Moore said: "Prevention still attracts only 2% of all health funding. We hope that this report will mark a real commitment to providing the funding that prevention needs so that we can make a real impact on the burden of chronic disease that threatens to overwhelm our health systems."

"We welcome the comprehensive nature of this report. The staged approach to implementation is especially important – the timelines are all feasible, if there is commitment and support from the Government and the community. We know that there is strong public support for action on prevention, and hope that there will be cross-party support for the program of action proposed."

"There are also important workforce implications from this report. There is a pressing need to ensure a strong prevention workforce to implement the approaches recommended, and we will wish to play a part in ensuring that this occurs."

"The time for action is now. We commend the Government for establishing the Taskforce, and urge that the strategies proposed be implemented as speedily as possible."

For further information/comment:

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