

12 October 2016

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Public Health Association  
AUSTRALIA

## International report shows the need for a sugar tax to prevent obesity

A new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows the need for a sugar tax on sugar sweetened beverages to be implemented to prevent type II diabetes, chronic diseases and to lower obesity rates.

“The most authoritative health organisation in the world recognises the urgent need to implement a sugar tax on soft drink. [63% of Australians are either overweight or obese](#) and this will continue to rise if measures are not put in place to protect the future generation. A sugar tax is a no brainer,” said President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations Michael Moore.

The report ‘[Fiscal policies for Diet and Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases \(NCDs\)](#)’ released on World Obesity Day shows a 20% increase in the retail price of sugary drinks would result in proportional reductions in consumption of such products.

“Half of Australians are living with one or more chronic diseases and [1.2 million Australians have diabetes, 85% of whom have type II diabetes](#). We cannot ignore these statistics any longer and need to act now to ensure a healthy community,” said Mr Moore also CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA),” said Mr Moore.

“Not only are soft drinks harmful in terms of diet but they are a major factor of poor oral health, yet Australians drink them by the litre every day. By putting a tax on soft drinks, Australians will be more likely to choose cheaper, healthier options which will result in less sugar being consumed,” said Mr Moore.

Globally, an estimated [42 million children aged under 5 years were overweight or obese in 2015](#), an increase of about 11 million during the past 15 years.

Today, [Ireland announced a tax on sugar sweetened drink to come into effect in April 2018](#) following the UK’s announcement in March 2016. Other countries have implemented the tax including Mexico and Hungary.

“The Government have reduced funding for prevention initiatives from [2.2% to 1.4% since 2008](#) while obesity rates continue to rise. Investing in prevention is paramount to good public health for all Australians and with initiatives like a sugar tax we can make a health difference to the health of the community,” said PHAA CEO Mr Moore.

“Australia needs a sugar tax on soft drink with the income generated from the levy invested in public health initiatives promoting healthy foods for disadvantaged groups; to provide additional support for the Health Star Rating system on packaged foods; and to coordinate this with a comprehensive National Food and Nutrition Policy,” said PHAA CEO Mr Moore.

“WHO is encouraging all countries to implement an effective tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to prevent obesity. Today is Ireland, why can’t Australia be tomorrow?” concluded Mr Moore.

**For further information/comment:**

Sophie Brown (Michael Moore comment)

[communications@phaa.net.au](mailto:communications@phaa.net.au)

0421 749 608

