



Latest AIHW Healthy Communities data provides for New Year's resolutions for governments

The latest health data released from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has provided for some important New Year's resolution for the government to improve the health of all Australians.

The data, which has been separated in to local areas including Primary Health Networks (PHN), shows ongoing disproportionate health differences between metropolitan and regional/rural areas. For example, those living in the Western NSW PHN are 30% more likely to be overweight or obese and more than three times more likely to smoke than those living in Northern Sydney PHN. This puts them at high risk of cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

"We know that where you live greatly impacts on your health" said Michael Moore CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA). "However, it is also important to acknowledge that such differences are more likely attributable to the socio-economic circumstances and the spread of wealth within these regions rather on the locations themselves. Across the world we know that better health has a strong association with greater wealth"

Variations in health risk and outcome is evident in differences between metropolitan areas even when there is not much distance between areas. In these cases geographical differences can still be substantial. One example is the overweight and obesity rates between Eastern Melbourne PHN (65.9%) and South Eastern Melbourne PHN (59.3%).

The government must take action to address these health issues which are two of the biggest yet preventable risk factors for chronic disease and premature death.

New Year's Resolutions for governments

Each year on 1 January millions of Australians make New Year's resolutions to improve their own health. "In the lead up to 2017 the PHAA calls on governments to make four New Year's resolutions to help Australians improve their health wherever they live" continued Mr Moore.

Four New Year's resolutions for governments in 2017:

1. Develop and implement a National Food and Nutrition Plan to provide national guidance and consistency
2. Stop the marketing of 'junk food' to children
3. Implement a sugar tax and invest the money generated in to public health initiatives
4. Greater investment in targeted anti-tobacco campaigns

"The Healthy Communities report comes one week after the launch of the [Getting Australia's Health on Track](#) by the Australian Health Policy Collaboration and the joint policy on [food security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#). These documents reinforce the need for significant action by government to address preventable illnesses," added President of the PHAA David Templeman.

"Getting Australia's Health on Track and the Healthy Communities reports provides us with a guide forward. This is of particular importance in relation to the concerted effort required to improve the health and wellbeing not only of people in rural and remote areas, but particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People,"

"We know what is needed. The time for the government to act is now," concluded Mr Templeman.

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