Not enough investment in disease prevention

The 2019 federal Budget does too little to prevent Australia’s major illnesses, according to Public Health Association of Australia CEO Terry Slevin.

“Australia is one of the lowest investors in illness prevention of any OECD nation at less than 2% of our national health spending,” Mr Slevin said.

“Two of our biggest killers were conspicuous by their absence in the Budget - obesity and alcohol.”

“Nonetheless this Budget has some valuable and welcome investments:

- Extension of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule ($1 Billion)
- Mental health and suicide prevention commitments ($736M) - these are sorely needed
- Research investment via the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) guarantees ($260M over 10 years) for preventive and public health research plus another $160M in Indigenous health research over 11 years
- Global health research focused on antimicrobial resistance ($28M) is welcome
- A tobacco control campaign at $20M over 4 years is a starting point, but smoking remains one of our biggest killers. We need to do much more to kick start serious tobacco control efforts.
- Promoting social inclusion and being physically active via sports ($23.6M)
- Take Home Naloxone Program ($7.2M)

“Spending on good health care, effective drugs and research is important and essential. But a continual downward spiral in real prevention is a trend we must seriously address.”

“We should have ambitious goals for real life-long health. To reach that point we need major action to contain the explosion of obesity and overweight in our community.”

“We need to do so much more to limit the harms of misuse of alcohol. And we have a massive gap to close regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.”

“But the long-term wellbeing of the community has not figured sufficiently in this budget,” said Mr Slevin.

“Like inaction on climate change, the budget does little to prevent a future illness tsunami.”

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