Anticipating a long-awaited National Preventive Health Strategy

The Public Health Association of Australian (PHAA) welcomes the announcement today by Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt to establish an Australian Preventive Health Strategy.

Mr Hunt made the announcement at the start of PHAA’s Public Health Prevention Conference in Melbourne. He urged a packed auditorium of public health researchers and experts to offer him “fearless ideas” on prevention.

PHAA CEO Terry Slevin welcomed the offer for bold participation and said, “We will make every effort to constructively contribute to the thinking and planning to create a world leading plan to make Australians the healthiest people in the world.”

“Any national strategy must focus on those with the greatest need and those at greatest disadvantage because we know that poverty and minority vulnerabilities have a profound impact on health outcomes.”

“Of course, the very best strategy is only the first step. The real benefit only flows if action and investment follow to effectively implement a great strategy.”

“Time is of the essence given rising rates of chronic illness in Australia, preventable diseases that are burdening children and young people especially.”

“Mr Hunt is moving on a pre-election pledge to make prevention a focus.”

“If we get this strategy right, future generations will benefit with a healthier and higher quality of life but also see a reduced bill when it comes to the ever-growing cost of health care,” Mr Slevin said.

The PHAA, as Australia’s pre-eminent public health advocacy body would like to see greater effort on –

• Promoting the benefits of a healthy diet and physical activity to tackle chronic illness, namely obesity
• Reducing junk food, gambling and alcohol advertising to children
• Pre-empting climate change-related illness in the face of more floods and droughts
• Reducing cancer and heart disease causing smoking and alcohol consumption, and
• Improving health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents

The above will rely on setting a national target of 5% of Australia’s health budget to focus on prevention.

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