PIVOT TO PREVENTION

Australia spends over $170 Billion each year on health.

Of that spend, less than 2% is invested in population and preventive health.

We must address the tsunami of chronic disease emerging from an aging population and unhealthy lifestyles, where the most disadvantaged experience the worst health outcomes. We also need a rational economic response to the ever-growing national costs of illness treatment.

We are recommending the following:

1. Five Percent for Prevention
   We are recommending that one in every twenty dollars spent in health is invested in prevention. We have had a range of successes, with progress on tobacco, immunisation, SunSmart screening and more. With a greater commitment to prevention we can achieve more with the goal of making Australians the healthiest people on earth.

   To do that we need to build prevention into our health system as a central pillar of activity.

2. Mechanism to assess the best prevention investment
   Just as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) plays the role of independent expert advice to government – assessing the efficacy and cost effectiveness of proposed drugs – an expert, evidence driven entity is needed to guide decisions on the best investments in preventive health.

3. Infrastructure to fund prevention effort in an ongoing way
   We have the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to administer the investment in drugs. We have the Medical Benefits Scheme to guide and fund our use of medical services and programs. We have the NHMRC and the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to steer our commitment to research.

   We have no established embedded structure to commit long term to preventive health efforts.

   Drawing on the best advice, machinery is needed to ensure continued and reliable resourcing of preventive health efforts. The benefits are largely long term. So too should be the thinking and mechanisms to lead our preventive health efforts.