Federal savings to be made investing in prevention

The Public Health Association of Australia is calling on the Federal Government to fund an ‘AirSmart’ public health awareness campaign in response to hazardous air quality caused by ongoing bushfires across Australia.

“It should be part of an evidence-based and consistent air quality reporting program needed to help Australians keep themselves safe, especially those with existing heart or lung conditions, pregnant women and asthmatics,” said CEO Terry Slevin.

“The measure, inspired by the SunSmart skin cancer prevention campaign, is not costly - estimated at $9 million - given the potential long-term health impacts of bushfire smoke.”

‘AirSmart’ is one of many prevention-focused measures in PHAA’s Pre-Budget submission finalised this week for the 2020-21 Federal Budget.

PHAA’s big-ticket item is a proposed shakeup of how Australia funds and evaluates public health measures with an ambitious target to prevent disease.

“We propose a national target of 5% for preventive investments in our good health, up from the current measly 1.5%.”

“We call for this to be implemented through the creation of an ongoing mechanism by which independent experts can assess proposed illness prevention programs, followed up with an automatic system for ensuring that the best programs are quickly and consistently funded and rolled out.

“The processes for selecting, approving and funding preventive health programs should be as robust as other health architecture in Australia such as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule,” Mr Slevin said.

PHAA’s submission to the Commonwealth Treasury also recommends specific budget measures to address the common drivers of disease, including alcohol and tobacco use, and the causes of obesity.

Find the full document here.

For further information/comment:
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