

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

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Prevention part of the cure for a better health system

“What will be done about chronic disease prevention?” This is a crucial question that must be addressed by the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader in their health reform debate according to Australia’s largest disease prevention groups.

“We challenge Mr Rudd and Mr Abbott to tell us what they will do to reduce smoking, alcohol abuse and the burgeoning rates of obesity and overweight that are driving our increasing rates of chronic disease,” said Professor Ian Olver, Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

“While improving hospitals is important, keeping people healthy and out of hospital in the first place is also vital for a sustainable health system. Yet only 2.3% of health system expenditure is on prevention,” he said.

“Over four million Australians already suffer from largely preventable chronic diseases associated with smoking, obesity and alcohol abuse – diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

“Millions more will join them unless we get serious about tackling these risk factors.”

“The cost to the health system of these diseases is expected to triple to over \$40 billion dollars a year within 20 years, so putting prevention strategies in place now is critical to the sustainability of the health system,” Professor Olver said.

“We have a blueprint for action in the preventive health strategy recommended by the National Preventative Health Taskforce last year,” Professor Olver said. “This strategy provides comprehensive evidence-based strategies to address obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse and is strongly supported by public health groups across the nation.

“Yet nine months later, we have yet to see the Government take action on this report,” he said.

“Nor do we know the Opposition’s position on the Taskforce recommendations.

“Who will be prepared to put the health of Australians ahead of vested interests by taking some of the tough decisions, such as restricting unhealthy food advertising to children?”

“The time has come for all the players to lay their cards on the table and be upfront about their commitment to preventive health,” Professor Olver said.

“With an additional 10,000 Australians becoming overweight or obese each month, we simply can’t afford to delay preventive action any longer.”

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Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance members: Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; Kidney Health Australia; Heart Foundation; National Stroke Foundation.