

## AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



### Media Release

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#### Investing in prevention can save costs as well as improve health

Australia's largest disease prevention groups are calling on the returned Gillard government to ramp up investment in preventive health following the release today of a cost-effectiveness study demonstrating that enormous health gains and cost savings could be achieved.

Commenting on the release of *The Assessing Cost-Effectiveness in Prevention* report, Professor Greg Johnson, spokesperson for the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance and Acting CEO of Diabetes Australia said the report was a timely reminder of the importance and value of investing in prevention.

"Investing in prevention to keep people healthy and out of hospital is vital for a sustainable health system, but with only 2.3% of our current health system expenditure on prevention, much more needs to be done," Professor Johnson said.

Professor Johnson said that the ACE-Prevention report identified over 70 cost-saving and cost-effective preventive health interventions, with a few key interventions assessed as having the greatest impact in terms of health gain and cost savings.

"Together with the recommendations of the National Preventative Health Taskforce and the previous ACE report in Victoria, the ACE-Prevention report provides a strong platform for increased government action to reduce smoking, alcohol abuse and the burgeoning rates of obesity and overweight that are driving our increasing rates of chronic disease," he said.

"Of the key interventions identified in the ACE-prevention report we strongly support the proposals to increase taxes on tobacco and alcohol, introduce mandatory salt limits for bread, margarines and cereals, and improve screening for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease," Professor Johnson said.

"A previous ACE report also pointed to the cost effectiveness of restrictions on advertising of unhealthy foods to children and traffic light labelling on food packaging and these need to be considered in the range of possible effective interventions."

"We also support the introduction of the physical activity interventions which were assessed as cost-effective although more moderate in impact, including pedometers, mass media campaigns and GP-based interventions.

"The introduction of a junk food tax warrants further investigation given the complex factors that affect our food choices. One area where we could proceed is a tax on sugary soft drinks where we know there are cheaper, healthier alternatives such as water and low fat milk."

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