

## AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



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#### **Government must put the health of Australians first in tackling obesity**

A comprehensive plan to tackle Australia's burgeoning obesity problem has been welcomed by the nation's largest independent disease prevention groups as crucial to curbing rising rates of chronic disease and protecting the future health and wellbeing of all Australians.

"With a staggering seven million Australians already overweight or obese, the Government must put health of Australians first and act immediately to implement the obesity prevention strategy recommended by the Preventative Health Taskforce", said Professor Ian Olver, Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

"We must take action now or nearly 17 million Australians will be overweight or obese by 2025, chronic disease rates will sky rocket, life expectancy will drop and the burden on the health system will become unsustainable" Professor Olver said.

Professor Olver commended the Taskforce on developing a comprehensive, multi-sector strategy that addressed the many factors contributing to rising obesity rates.

"This strategy requires action and commitment at all levels: individuals, families, schools, workplaces, communities, health services and industry as well as all tiers of government," Professor Olver said.

"However the Federal Government must drive the changes required to put the health of Australians first, regardless of the opposition of vested interests," he said.

"Taskforce recommendations such as restricting advertising of unhealthy foods to children and introducing food labeling which guides people to healthier choices are sure to be opposed by some sectors of the food industry," Professor Olver noted.

"The government must take a hard line on issues such as these and consider legislation where necessary to underpin its obesity strategy," Professor Olver said.

Professor Olver also said the new National Health Promotion and Prevention Agency must have the independence and authority it needs to work across all portfolios and jurisdictions and that it should report directly to the Prime Minister and the Health Minister.

"However, establishing the Agency should not be an excuse to delay implementing measures for which we already have evidence of effectiveness," he said.

"We will be holding the government to account on its progress in implementing the Taskforce's recommendations," Professor Olver said.

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*Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance members are: Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia, National Heart Foundation of Australia and National Stroke Foundation.*