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PREVENTION KEY TO HELP TACKLE HEALTH CRISIS

AMA Submission to the draft National Preventive Health Strategy

The AMA has made a submission in response to the Department of Health’s draft National Preventive Health Strategy, welcoming many parts of the draft strategy while also calling for strengthening specific measures targeting social determinants of health.

The National Preventive Health Strategy, due to be finalised mid-year, forms part of the third pillar for mental health and preventive health as outlined in Australia’s Long Term National Health Plan.

Currently only 1.7 per cent of the health budget is invested in preventive health. The AMA supports the draft Strategy’s proposal to increase that to 5 per cent of health funding by 2030.

“The AMA welcomes the draft Strategy as a leading example of collaborative, evidence-based policy work and is pleased to be involved in genuine engagement with the Government during its development,” AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said.

“We know a person’s health is shaped by social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions in which they live.

“Prevention is key. The [AMA’s Social Determinants of Health](#) Position Statement captures the importance of the overall health of Australians by focusing on those inequities.

“Investing just 1.7 per cent of the health budget in preventive measures is woefully inadequate and far below the example set by similar countries in the OECD.

“The AMA’s submission calls on the Government to implement a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages and a volumetric tax on alcohol to source revenue for increased funding, rather than taking from other areas of the already-stretched health budget.

“The draft Strategy includes some promising elements including a commendable acknowledgment of the underlying social, economic, environmental and cultural determinants of health which means prevention efforts need to be widely targeted and not focused only on individual behaviour change.

“It’s good to see the Strategy include robust policy recommendations on health literacy, tobacco control, alcohol and other drugs, nutrition, physical activity, immunisation, mental health and cancer screening,” Dr Khorshid said.

The AMA’s submission also outlines several improvements needed in the Strategy including carrying through the recognition of underlying health determinants into practical policy suggestions, acknowledging climate change mitigation as a key preventive health opportunity and making sure all targets are measurable and time-bound.

“Focusing on prevention will not only save lives, but it will also take pressure off the health system in the long term,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Doctors, especially GPs have a vital role to play in preventive health in terms of early intervention and helping patients to manage risk factors.

“Ultimately what the Strategy needs is some clear next steps.

“Once it’s released – how will its recommended policies be taken forward and by whom? What are the frameworks in place to ensure the ambition set out in the Strategy is carried forward.

“The AMA looks forward to the finalised Strategy and accompanying funding announcements by the Australian Government to ensure it is implemented and the 5 per cent funding target is reached by 2030.”

The AMA submission is available [here](#).

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