

MEDIA RELEASE**Health and community leaders back campaign against chronic disease**

More than twenty-five health and community leaders have today called on all political parties to agree before the election to act to reduce the “devastating burden of chronic disease”.

The open letter signatories, who include Ita Buttrose AO OBE, Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM, Professor Ian Webster AO, and June Oscar AO, have signed up to a call by Prevention 1st urging political parties to put preventive health policy first ahead of the July Federal Election.

The Prevention 1st alliance, comprising the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), Alzheimer's Australia and the Consumer's Health Forum of Australia (CHF), gathered at Parliament this morning to launch the campaign which proposes seven steps to address the chronic disease epidemic.

The signatories said that despite the obesity crisis, Australia had dramatically underinvested in preventive health measures to reduce premature death rates, 83 per cent of which are caused by chronic illness.

“Because of our inaction in this area, for the first time, we face the very real prospect that our children will have a shorter life expectancy than us. We can no longer adopt an ‘ambulance at the bottom of the hill’ approach to health in this country.”

The Prevention 1st alliance said that the strong level of support demonstrated by the prominent and respected Australians who signed the open letter highlights the growing unease in the community about the need for Australia to take more effective action to prevent chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

Dealing with chronic disease comes at an estimated \$27 billion cost to the Australian community and accounts for more than a third (36 per cent) of our national health budget.

A third of all chronic diseases can be traced back to four modifiable risk factors: alcohol and tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

The *Prevention 1st 2016 Election Platform: Our greatest health challenge*, outlines a clear road map for how to reduce the burden of chronic disease by addressing these known risk factors and urges Australia's political representatives to take action.

“This is not a problem without solutions. If we care about health, then we must put prevention first. Future generations depend on us to take the actions needed to make this happen. The actions that you take during this election campaign can dramatically improve the lives of Australians and reduce the devastating burden of chronic disease.”

The Prevention 1st election platform calls for action in seven areas:

1. Increase the expenditure on preventive health and ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to address the burden of chronic disease.
2. Commit to achieving the World Health Organization’s 2025 non-communicable disease reduction targets and publicly report on progress in reaching these targets.
3. Reform tax systems to minimise economic externalities, encourage healthier choices, and maximise health and economic benefits to the community.
4. Implement a health labelling regime on alcohol and food products to provide information to the community at the point of consumption.
5. Stop the unhealthy promotion and marketing of products that are associated with increased risk of chronic disease.
6. Create physical and social environments that support individuals and communities to make healthy decisions.
7. Fund public education campaigns on alcohol, tobacco, physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

ENDS

Media notes:

The *Prevention 1st 2016 Election Platform: Our greatest health challenge*, will be launched at 10:30am Friday 5 June at the Senate Courtyard of Parliament House in Canberra.

Michael Thorn (FARE), Michael Moore (PHAA), Carol Bennett (Alzheimer’s Australia) and Leanne Wells (CHF) are available for interviews.

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Prevention 1st is a campaign backed by like-minded public health organisations, not-for-profits, and research and advocacy bodies, calling on all Australian governments and political parties to commit to a strong preventive health agenda to tackle Australia’s greatest health challenge. Prevention 1st will pursue every opportunity to express the need for action on public policy that the evidence shows will stop and prevent the rising burden of chronic disease.