

Prevention

On average, Australians are living longer and spending more of their life in good health. However, years lived in ill health are also increasing, Australians from lower socioeconomic groups live fewer years in full healthⁱ and the gap in health-adjusted life expectancy at birth between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is stark (15.2 years for males and 13.9 years for females).ⁱⁱ

The prevalence of chronic conditions is also increasing with almost half of Australians (47%) having one or more chronic conditions compared with 42% a decade ago.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to negatively impacting the lives of many Australians, their loved ones and the broader community, these conditions place a heavy burden on our health system and the public purse that funds it.

Chronic conditions account for over 50% of the total burden of disease in Australia.^{iv} Given that almost 40% of the burden of disease could be prevented by addressing modifiable risk factors such as overweight and obesity, dietary risks, high blood pressure, tobacco and alcohol use,^v it is crucial that the Government invests in preventive health measures that target these risk factors.

The RACP calls on the incoming Government to **invest in preventive health measures to reduce preventable chronic disease and ill health** by:

- Committing to fully fund the effective implementation of the National Preventive Health Strategy which requires 5% of health expenditure for prevention over 10 years and the newly released National Obesity Strategy and Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2021-2030. COVID-related expenditure should be excluded from the funding for the National Preventive Health Strategy to ensure that adequate funding is available to deliver preventive health on non-communicable diseases.
- Implementing a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to encourage manufacturers to reduce the sugar content of beverages
- Improving consistency and reduce alcohol-related harm by replacing the current Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) and rebate system with a volumetric taxation scheme for all alcohol products.
- Raising the baseline rate of social support to increase recipients' ability to make healthy choices, particularly around preventive health issues such as positive diet and lifestyle changes. These support measures should be extended to people living on Temporary Visas, particularly asylum seekers and refugees.

ⁱ Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: key findings. Published 18 August 2021

ⁱⁱ Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: key findings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Published 7 October 2021

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Chronic Condition, 2018. Online: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/chronic-conditions/latest-release#:~:text=Endnotes-,Key%20statistics,chronic%20conditions%20increased%20with%20age> [last accessed 03/03/2022]

^{iv} Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: key findings. Published 18 August 2021

^v Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Key findings. Published 18 August 2021