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Community shows strong appetite for public health initiatives: Survey

Most Australians support kilojoule labelling on menu boards, and the majority say it makes sense to boost investment in public health initiatives to deal with threats to Australia's future health, such as obesity and type 2 diabetes, according to a national survey published today (10 March).

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and VicHealth *Healthy Australia* survey was taken by 2,892 people online in October and November 2010, with the sample weighted to represent the population.

Results from the survey showed:

- 64 per cent support increasing illness prevention spend from 30 cents per person per day to \$1 per person per day
- 83 per cent agree with mandatory kilojoule information on fast food menu boards, with over two thirds (67 per cent) indicating they would use this information to make their choice
- 79 per cent support increased funding for public health initiatives and government-led interventions to slow the rate of chronic disease
- 71 per cent say Australian governments should fund programs specifically for workplaces that support healthy eating, physical activity and reduced sitting time.

VicHealth CEO Todd Harper said: "These findings suggest that the community has got a pretty good idea of what they think will work to help reduce the threats of diabetes, cancer, heart disease and other lifestyle-related illnesses. This is supported by health experts and our own research.

"There's absolutely no doubt that health promotion and illness prevention works, and is cost effective. Giving people information to help them make healthier choices and preventing disease before it occurs is nowhere near as costly as treatment and picking up the pieces once people are sick.

"The recent *ACE-Prevention* study predicts that if we double the current investment in preventing illness, that would give Australians at least one million extra years lived healthily."

PHAA CEO Michael Moore added "This survey tells us that people do want governments to do all they can to foster good health and to prevent illness and disease before it occurs. One of the best ways to do that is to increase investment in public health.

"Recent initiatives such as kilojoule labelling on menu boards, the government's commitment to public education on tobacco and obesity and the food and alcohol labelling recommendations in the *Blewett Labelling Logic* independent report to government are a sure sign that governments are serious about preventing illness and promoting good health."

The [Healthy Australia research report](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au) is available for download at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au and <http://www.phaa.net.au/>
