

# National Prevention Summit

Investing in Australia's health and wellbeing



## A PLATFORM FOR ADVANCING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ALL AUSTRALIANS

## PREAMBLE

The Platform for Prevention was prepared for the National Prevention Summit held in Melbourne on 9 April 2008. It has been further refined following that meeting, in order to inform discussion at the Australia 2020 Summit, as well as the work programs of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the National Preventative Health Taskforce.

The participants at the National Prevention Summit agreed on a number of underlying principles and steps for policy development and program delivery for prevention. These include:

- A comprehensive and sustainable approach to prevention that considers, both immediate risk factors as well as the social determinants of health.
- A commitment to equity, universality and shared responsibility for prevention and health promotion, while at the same time, decreasing the health gap for disadvantaged groups.
- The need for much more informed citizen and community engagement in priority setting and reporting of outcomes.
- A formal commitment to a partnership with sectors outside of health, within and outside of government in order to create environments that sustain health.
- Advocacy to create a society-wide culture for health promotion and prevention.
- Accountability for preventive actions and outcomes at all levels of government, including annual reporting to Parliament and COAG; and finally,
- The need to significantly increase funding for prevention as a proportion of total health expenditure.

There is now compelling evidence that Australia will reap short- and long-term health, social and economic benefits from making prevention a high national priority. Moreover, the health system itself will benefit from increased investment in and emphasis on prevention. As argued in the AIHPS-VicHealth paper, *A vision for prevention in Australia*, this requires a series of steps to be taken, in order to ensure the future health and wellbeing of all Australians, particularly those for whom the life expectancy and wellbeing gap is largest, that is, Indigenous Australians.

The Platform for Action proposes six interlocking strategies:

1. Engaging all levels of society
2. Strengthening leadership and coordination
3. Creating sustainable financing
4. Building infrastructure and resources
5. Integrating evidence, policy and practice
6. Improving equity and fairness

Each **strategy** represents a foundation stone for building a robust prevention agenda in Australia. Each of the suggested **actions** will contribute to the realisation of these. Together they build a **system** to underpin programs targeted at specific health conditions and risks.

## A VISION FOR PREVENTION

We seek to create a nation in which health for all Australians is valued and where health promotion, the prevention of illness and quality care are high priorities and equitable health outcomes are a national goal.

# THE PLATFORM

## STRATEGY 1:

### ENGAGE ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY

Given that good health benefits everyone, the broader Australian society should participate in setting priorities and deciding on actions that prevent illness and promote health and wellbeing.

#### Actions

- Establish systematic methods of ensuring informed citizen engagement for priority setting in prevention and review of achievements.
- Develop explicit mechanisms to engage wider community and business constituencies in prevention and health promotion activities, e.g. establishment of regular national health policy roundtables with key sectors.
- Encourage open community debate about the social, economic, physical and cultural drivers of ill health and the strategies required for addressing these.
- Encourage and build a culture and understanding of health promotion and prevention in the community that supports action, including a regulation if necessary, to ensure that the environment is safe and health-promoting.

## STRATEGY 2:

### STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION

Vision, leadership, agreed outcomes and coordination across multiple sectors, settings, and levels of government are vital to achieving the goals of prevention and health promotion.

#### Actions

- Where appropriate, establish cross-jurisdictional and cross-portfolio mechanisms to implement the priorities and actions agreed under the National Preventative Health Strategy.
- Drive accountability through the COAG Health Working Group by identifying a small number of selected performance indicators that would be reported upon nationally.
- Through the COAG Health Working Group or similar, promote the integration of prevention into all sectors and levels of government in Australia.
- Ensure a 'Health in all Policies' approach to legislation, especially the regulation of activities which damage the public good, including health.

- Identify and encourage 'champions for prevention' in government, in the private and non-government sectors and the wider community, who could advocate for the changes needed to promote better health.
- Provide prevention leadership training and a framework applied through all relevant workforce development programs.
- Establish a national capability – e.g. a national public health institute or similar - to coordinate prevention policies, programs, research, expertise and services across the country.

## STRATEGY 3:

### CREATE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

New approaches are required to ensure that the funding available for expansion of prevention in this country is sufficient, accessible and sustainable.

#### Actions

- The National Preventative Health Taskforce should recommend methods and approaches to *scale up* prevention programs and approaches that have been demonstrated to be efficient, effective and equitable.
- Task COAG with establishing a new financial framework for prevention and health promotion (including specific incentives for prevention in inter-government funding agreements).
- Review and build on Australian and international experience with the use of taxation-based and related strategies, including the creation of health promotion foundations from tobacco and alcohol taxes.
- Develop transparent funding models and incentives/disincentives that support prevention through new and existing financing mechanisms — e. g., Medical Benefits Scheme, hospital funding, private health insurance and WorkCover, or additional taxes on products such as tobacco, unhealthy foods or alcohol.
- Encourage private sector engagement in prevention and health promotion including appropriate price signals or taxation incentives for provision of healthy products and funding for prevention research.
- Ensure that government funding or purchasing of health and community services do not carry disincentives for health promotion and prevention activities.

## STRATEGY 4: BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE & RESOURCES

Reorient current, and create future, infrastructure and resources for sustainable and effective prevention and health promotion.

### Actions

- Develop a stronger workforce for prevention by building on existing initiatives in public health education and research, introducing new initiatives such as national public health training schemes, and developing innovative approaches to incorporate population health knowledge and skills into diverse workforce categories and disciplines, starting with all relevant undergraduate education programs.
- Improve capabilities in collection, analysis and use of health information, data-sets and knowledge management systems to support planning and action for prevention and drawing on international models such as the area-based public health observatories in the UK.
- Ensure continuous monitoring of risk factors and social determinants of health through expansion of existing surveillance systems to support strategic use of information for developing interventions focused on up-stream influences on health.
- Increase accountability through regular public reporting on outcomes, i.e., annual reports on health outcomes, and establish a national reporting system (national scorecard) or national surveys against key health goals and targets.

## STRATEGY 5: INTEGRATE EVIDENCE, POLICY & PRACTICE

Research, practice and policy need to be integrated for prevention to be effective and to strengthen the evidence base.

### Actions

- Establish an authoritative national advisory body to assess evidence and provide advice on implementation of preventive good practice, with links to funding decisions and workforce development.
- Build the investment in applied intervention research, evaluation and innovative development via existing research funding mechanisms (such as NHMRC) and program coordination units, ensuring that effectiveness, efficiency and equity considerations are incorporated into program evaluation.

- Improve coordination of, and collaboration between research activities across funding bodies around Australia, including the establishment of shared priorities for prevention and health promotion.
- Develop and implement incentives and support mechanisms for adoption of evidence-informed practice into program delivery.
- Build knowledge brokerage mechanisms to facilitate greater linkages and sharing of information needs and intelligence between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, including greater collaboration with other social policy frameworks e.g. housing, transport.

## STRATEGY 6: IMPROVE EQUITY AND FAIRNESS

An equity lens needs to be used in all prevention endeavours in order to decrease the health gap for disadvantaged groups.

### Actions

- Develop strategies for prevention that concentrate action on the social, cultural, commercial and economic factors that influence health and limit healthy choices. Ensure that these strategies emphasise the greater need for action to reduce the impact of the upstream causes of ill-health among people who are less advantaged.
- Actively engage the community about conditions in society that influence health outcomes e.g. urban design and planning, access to adequate housing and education, food supply and employment. Place particular attention on early childhood development.
- Encourage governments to adopt effective regulatory strategies and monitoring systems to promote corporate social responsibility and that includes ways (such as regulation and tax incentives) to ensure that goods and services promote, rather than diminish, the health of the consumer.
- Ensure that allocation of program funding and design recognise the particular needs of disadvantaged communities.

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