

28 January 2022

Pre-Budget Submissions

prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au

Dear Treasury

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to Pre-Budget Submission 2022-2023.

VicHealth was established by the Victorian Parliament in 1987 as the world's first health promotion foundation. We are a pioneer in health promotion – the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. Our primary focus is promoting good health and preventing chronic disease, including promoting physical activity, healthy eating and mental health and wellbeing, and preventing risky alcohol consumption and tobacco use.

In Australia, chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental and substance use disorders make up the highest burden of disease.¹ Many of these conditions can be prevented by addressing key risk factors –eating healthily, engaging in regular physical activity and reducing alcohol and tobacco use.

The cost of chronic disease in Australia is estimated at \$38 billion per year.² The COVID-19 pandemic has put Australia's health system under immense pressure and has further exacerbated inequities among Australians who are chronically ill. The ongoing burden of chronic disease is likely to increase as the pandemic wanes.³

We commend the Australian Government's National Preventive Health Strategy for creating a vision for preventive health care now and into the future.

To strengthen and support the targets and measures outlined in the National Preventive Health Strategy, VicHealth recommends that Treasury for the 2022-2023 Australian Government budget provide an ongoing funding commitment for preventive health, of at least 5% of the total national health budget by 2030, as set out in the National Preventive Health Strategy

We further recommend that Treasury allocate an appropriate amount for the 2022-2023 budget in accordance with this commitment.

¹ AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019a. Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 19. Cat. no. BOD 22. Canberra: AIHW.

² Liotta, M 2021, 'Where in Australia is chronic disease most prevalent?', RACGP, *newsGP*, viewed 25 January 2022, <https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/where-in-australia-is-chronic-disease-most-prevalent>

³ Fekadu, G et al. 2021, 'Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on chronic diseases care follow-up and current perspectives in low resource settings: a narrative review', *International journal of physiology, pathophysiology and pharmacology*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 86-93, viewed 25 January 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8310882/>

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Priority funding must be provided for evidence-based measures that have been demonstrated to be effective in promoting health as well as being cost-effective. VicHealth recommends that ongoing funding allocation must be determined by a mechanism that identifies priorities to be funded on an annual basis.

The 5% funding allocation towards preventive health measures must exclude spending related to the COVID-19 response and vaccination program and spending related to the treatment of non-communicable disease. It is essential that the funding is focused to primary prevention measures to reduce risk factors for chronic disease.

VicHealth also recommends that measures set out in National Preventive Health Strategy and the National Obesity Prevention Strategy are allocated new funding to ensure the measures are implemented, monitored and maintained.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission further. Should you wish to do so, please contact Jessica Stone, Policy Coordinator, on jstone@vichealth.vic.gov.au or 03 9667 9047.

Kind regards



Dr Sandro Demaio
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