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**Department of Health**



2021-2030

The National Preventive Health Strategy presents a powerful opportunity for Australia to build a sustainable prevention system for the future – building on previous success and momentum, addressing the increasing burden of disease, reducing health inequity and increasing preparedness for emerging health threats.

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## Title: Draft National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030

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# Shaping Australia's health

## Harnessing our current challenges to build healthier communities

For all Australians, there is immense value in being healthy and maintaining health right across one's life course, from prenatal to older age. But health is not just the presence or absence of disease or injury. More holistically, health is a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other communities, this also includes cultural wellbeing<sup>1,2</sup>. Australians in good health are better able to lead fulfilling and productive lives, participating fully in their community, in their education and/or in their employment. The benefits of this are experienced system-wide with decreased disease burden leading to a reduction in the pressures on our health system, and economic benefits demonstrated by an increase in Australia's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2017, the Productivity Commission conservatively estimated that the GDP could be increased by \$4 billion per year if the health of people in fair or poor health was improved<sup>3</sup>.

Preventive health action is the key to achieving a healthier Australia by 2030. Even though the majority of Australians have one of the longest life expectancies in the world secondary to successful and sustained prevention programs and a world-leading health system, more Australians are now living with and suffering from chronic illness than ever<sup>4</sup>. On average, Australians live almost eleven years in poor health, or around thirteen percent of their life<sup>5</sup>. Over the past fifty years, the prevalence of chronic

conditions has increased, leading to the majority of disease burden in Australia to be caused by cancer, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, and mental and substance disorders<sup>6</sup>. However, it is estimated that 38% of this disease burden could be prevented through a reduction in modifiable risk factors such as overweight and obesity, physical inactivity and alcohol, tobacco and other drug use<sup>7</sup>.

As the prevalence of illness and disease continues to rise, so too does the pressure on our health system. Alongside chronic conditions, infectious disease, injury and trauma also remain significant contributors to the poor health of Australians. In 2020, the emergence of coronavirus (COVID-19) highlighted how important it is to have an agile health system focussed on prevention. The Australian health system has had to adapt quickly during the pandemic, and all levels of government have responded by setting up a number of structural changes to the system. This included the Australian Government expanding telehealth, and establishing GP-led respiratory clinics to ensure the acute settings did not become overwhelmed. Australians rapidly modified their behaviour too, with handwashing, physical distancing, and self-isolating whilst unwell being instilled into the nation's approach to everyday life. The pandemic required an enormous public health response to protect the lives of Australians and there are key learnings that will continue to influence our

health system over the next decade.

Currently, our health system is fundamentally focussed on the treatment of illness and disease. During COVID-19, the profile of public health and prevention was significantly elevated. Data from around the world and in Australia demonstrated that individuals with preventable chronic conditions and vulnerabilities such as cardiovascular disease, smoking, and obesity, were at greater risk of adverse outcomes associated with COVID-19. This was a wake-up call to health systems worldwide, as it demonstrated that significantly more needs to be done outside of a pandemic in order to keep people healthy and well. We need to rebalance the health system; we need to invest more in prevention.

It is well known that when a community flourishes, its health tends to flourish too, enabling individuals to achieve their full potential. This is due to the close relationship between people's health and the circumstances in which people grow, live, work, play and age – also known as the wider determinants of health<sup>8</sup>. It is these social, environmental, structural, economic, cultural, biomedical and commercial factors that lead to inequity and inequality within society. These circumstances, including the neighbourhood we grew up in or our exposure to air pollution for example, are often outside of our control and play a significant role in determining our health and wellbeing. These inequities, which often exist at the systemic level, lead to the burden of disease being experienced unevenly in Australia. People in lower socioeconomic groups are at greater risk of poor health, with higher rates of illness, disability and death, as well as living shorter lives, than people from higher socioeconomic groups<sup>9</sup>.

Health inequities are, in particular, experienced by certain groups within society. This includes: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; those living in rural and remote areas, people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, people living with mental illness; people with disability; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning people and other sexuality and gender diverse people and/or intersex people (LGBTQI); and those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. While acknowledging the strengths and resilience of these groups, many experience an avoidable and greater burden of disease compared with the rest of the population<sup>10</sup>. In order to significantly improve the health of all Australians, a health equity lens must be applied to all preventive health action, with the needs of these groups

prioritised for action.

There is a risk that advances made in recent decades to improve our overall health could be reversed if Australia does not increase its focus on preventive health and health promotion, especially focussing on the wider determinants of health. In order to achieve this, a systems-based approach is critical to success. Australia's current prevention efforts need to be systematised, enhanced and strengthened in order to create long-term, sustainable improvements to the health and wellbeing of all Australians and to embed prevention across the life course. Australia already has a strong and successful health system, but we need to ensure that there is an equally strong prevention system.

The National Preventive Health Strategy (this Strategy) will create a stronger and more effective prevention system, and recognises that a whole-of-government response is required at all levels. This Strategy will enhance the focus on prevention not only within the current health system, but also beyond, involving other sectors and industries that have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of Australians.

This Strategy will address the third pillar of Australia's Long Term National Health Plan, and will align to the 2020-25 National Health Reform Agreement.

**This Strategy will ensure that in Australia:**

- 1.** children grow up in communities that nurture their healthy development - **providing the best start to life;**
- 2.** individuals are living well for longer, enjoying life as they age - **adding health to life;**
- 3.** groups that experience poorer health outcomes compared to the rest of the population have greater improvements in health - **addressing inequity in health;** and
- 4.** prevention is valued and viewed as a worthwhile and important venture - **funding is rebalanced towards prevention.**

Achieving this will require close alignment with other key health areas of reform for the Australian Government (e.g. the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan). It will also require alignment with other whole-of-government approaches, such as the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Aligning action through whole-of-government approaches will assist in making Australia a more equitable and healthy place to live, grow, work and play for generations to come.



## The Approach

**This will be a strategy for all Australians, no matter who they are or where they live.**

This Strategy provides the overarching, long-term approach to prevention in Australia by building systemic change to ensure the best outcomes for all Australians. It identifies areas of focus for the next 10 years and outlines the key achievements Australia should be striving for by 2030.

Effective prevention requires a collective and comprehensive effort across sectors to better prevent disease and to promote environments that support individuals to lead healthy lives. The responsibility for creating positive change by 2030 is shared: by all governments, the non-government sector, research and academia, the private sector, industries, communities and individuals. Every Australian and every sector has a role to play in achieving the vision that we are healthy and able to lead fulfilling and productive lives for as long as possible. This

Strategy is a collective framework for action.

Australia's Long Term National Health Plan outlines a number of areas of reform, including the development of the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan and reforms that target mental health and suicide prevention. These strategies and plans have been considered in the development of this Strategy to ensure there is a consistent and complementary approach to reform, particularly in regards to person-centred care, utilising partnerships, and embedding approaches that consider the wider determinants of health and wellbeing across the life course. This Strategy also complements the refreshed National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, which includes a focus on the cultural determinants and social determinants of health as the foundations for a healthy life.

**This Strategy has been developed using the best evidence from a range of sources including:**

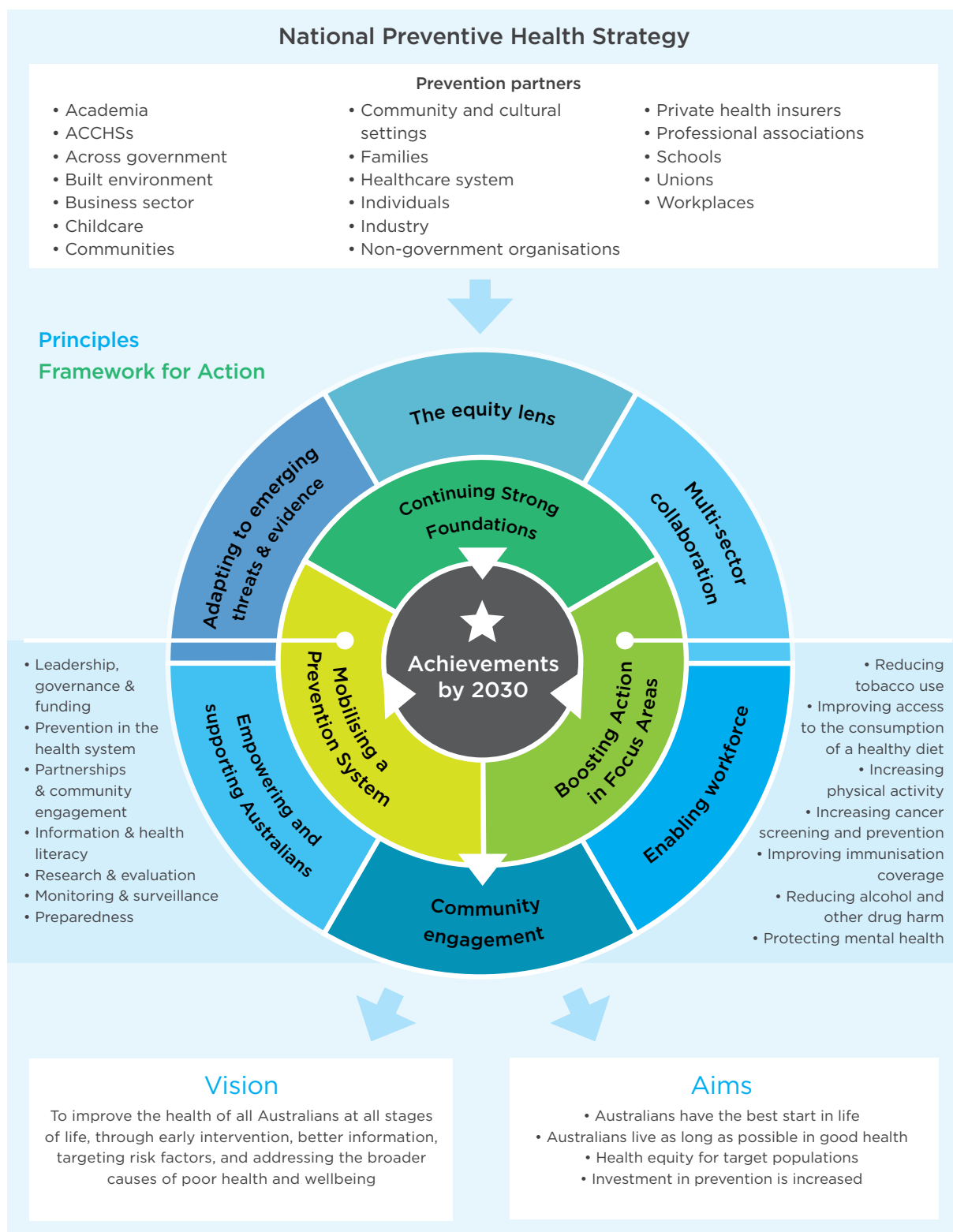


- National and international **evidence** about what works.
- Targeted **consultations**, which provided the opportunity to hear from experts in different fields of prevention; the views of people representing communities, consumer groups and advocacy organisations; and from the public about what is important to keep themselves, their families and their communities healthy.
- Responses from over 6,000 people through an **online survey**.
- The lessons **learned from past prevention activities**.
- Other relevant **national strategies, action plans and frameworks** to ensure the Strategy aligns with and builds on action in prevention.
- Relevant health consultations conducted by the Australian Government in recent years.

# What will this strategy achieve?

This Strategy articulates a vision supported by four high-level aims. The four aims include measurable targets in order to track the progress of this Strategy in achieving its vision.

Six principles are included in this Strategy to underpin the Framework for Action by guiding implementation and strengthening efforts.




## Vision


To improve the health of all Australians at all stages of life, through early intervention, better information, targeting risk factors and addressing the broader causes of poor health and wellbeing.

## Aims


**1. Australians have the best start in life.** This Strategy recognises the value of a life course approach, which emphasises the significance of prevention in the early years. Improving the prevention of risk factors for chronic conditions, injuries and infectious disease in childhood is critical in order to create strong foundations for later in life.


 **Target:** The proportion of the first 25 years lived in full health will increase by 2% by 2030


**2. Australians live as long as possible in good health.** A strong focus on preventive health and health promotion can extend the quality of life and life expectancy of Australians. Opportunities for prevention change as individuals age and this Strategy will support holistic action across the wider determinants of health to prevent chronic conditions, injuries, and infectious disease across the life course.

 **Target:** Australians will have an additional two years of life lived in full health by 2030


**3. Health equity for target populations.** The burden of ill health is not shared equally amongst Australians. This Strategy will result in overall greater gains for parts of the Australian community who are burdened unfairly due to the wider determinants of health.

 **Target:** Australians in the two lowest SEIFA quintiles will have an additional three years of life lived in full health by 2030

 **Target:** Australians in regional and remote areas will have an additional three years of life lived in full health by 2030

 **Target:** The rate of Indigenous-specific general practitioner health checks increases 10% year-on-year across each age group

**4. Investment in prevention is increased.** Health expenditure is currently spent primarily on the treatment of illness and disease. Investment in prevention needs to be enhanced in order to achieve a better balance between treatment and prevention in Australia, as outlined in Australia's Long Term National Health Plan.

 **Target:** Investment in preventive health will rise to be 5% of total health expenditure by 2030

## Principles

**Multi-sector collaboration.** In recognition of the wider determinants of health, multi-sector collaboration must inform policy to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Action by different sectors will be coordinated and aligned, to support integrated solutions to complex prevention challenges.

**Enabling the workforce.** The health workforce is enabled to embed prevention across the health system. Action must enable the health workforce to engage in promoting health and preventing illness through multi-disciplinary health care and utilising full scope of practice for all health professionals. This includes ensuring that the workforce is available, fully trained and capable of providing safe and responsive care.

**Community engagement.** All communities – including neighbourhoods, cultural and social groups, workplaces, schools and interest groups, along with non-government organisations and community-controlled organisations (such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services [ACCHSs]) – are engaged to drive prevention across the life course. Place-based approaches are led by communities, in recognition that local individuals are best placed to understand local needs and improve health outcomes for their communities.

**Empowering and supporting Australians.** All Australians, from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds are enabled and supported to make the best possible decisions about their health. Action must focus on appropriate and targeted information, health promotion, and on the environmental factors which impact individual autonomy.

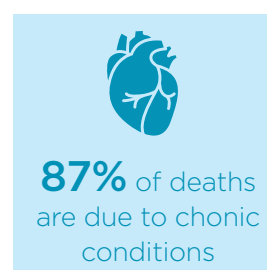
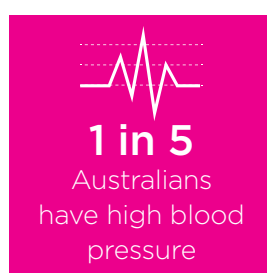
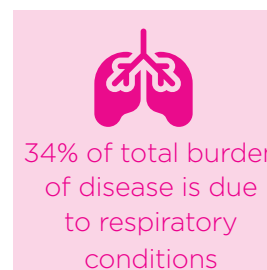
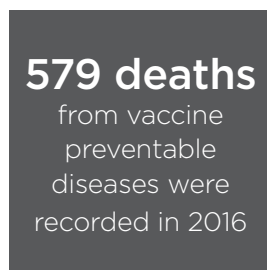
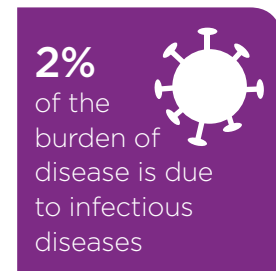
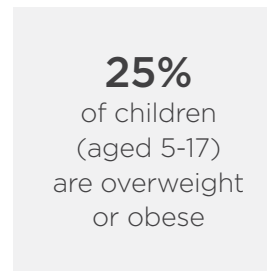
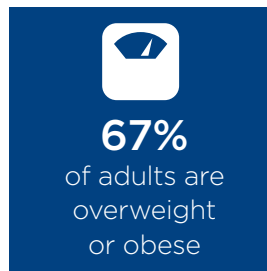
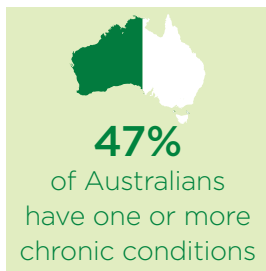
**Adapting to emerging threats and evidence.** Emerging threats to health, as well as the development of new science, are reviewed continuously to ensure prevention efforts minimise harms to health and achieve the greatest health gains possible. To determine where efforts should be prioritised, knowledge translation is vital.

**The equity lens.** Preventive health action considers the inequities that exist across Australia including the need for equitable access to healthcare. Action must focus on the external barriers that impact on health.



# Australia's report card<sup>11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19</sup>

(informed by Australia's Health Tracker, Mitchell Institute)







# Knowing the causes

## The root causes of poor health

Traditionally, emphasis has been placed on individuals and how their behaviour, actions and motivation have contributed to their overall state of health. But it is widely recognised that there are broad contextual factors that play an integral role in determining the health of society, many of which lie outside of both the health system and the control of individuals<sup>20,21</sup>. These broad contextual factors include the social, environmental, structural, economic, cultural, biomedical and commercial environments in which we live, work and play<sup>22, 23</sup>. These factors are the ‘causes of the causes’<sup>24</sup> – the reasons underpinning why some Australians are more likely to consume a poor diet or engage in less physical activity for example.

In order to understand the wider determinants of health, also commonly referred to as the causes of the causes<sup>25</sup>, they need to be viewed through a compassionate lens, one which allows us to see beyond highly individualised factors and to focus on the underlying conditions that have created these inequalities in the first place<sup>26</sup>. There is a complex interplay between the environmental influences and our health<sup>27</sup>. Not only is it a two-way relationship – i.e. our health influences our situation and our situation influences our health – but the relationship is also more than just a simple cause and effect<sup>28</sup>. If an individual lives in a low socioeconomic area, it is not certain they will develop more chronic conditions or engage in higher levels of risk factor behaviour, but the likelihood is stronger. Furthermore, it often takes time for the connections between our environment and our health to manifest; for example, it may take decades or generations to experience the deleterious effects of living in food insecurity or in an area with high air pollution.

Complex and multigenerational health outcomes can also result from ongoing racism and discrimination, such as the intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a consequence of colonisation and the Stolen Generations. Understanding and addressing the implications of these factors requires a trauma-informed approach.

The compassionate lens is also important when discussing the health inequities that exist between population groups. In many cases, it is the social determinants that have contributed to the preventable and unfair gap between different socioeconomic positions, genders, locations, and ethnicities or races<sup>29</sup>. In 2015, 20% of the disease burden in Australia could have been avoided if there had been no difference in burden across the five socioeconomic groups analysed by AIHW<sup>30</sup>.

Compassion also focusses on the web of interconnectedness that binds all Australians together; ultimately, if some Australians are suffering in poor health, then we are all impacted<sup>31</sup>. This has never been more apparent than it was in 2020 when the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inequities that some population groups are exposed to on a daily basis<sup>32,33</sup>. The pandemic forced Australians to understand and acknowledge that the health of the community has ramifications for the health of all.

Each social determinant, and its indirect and direct relationship to health, is outlined in more detail below. With each of these factors, apart from the cultural determinants of health, there is both a protective and adverse impact on health and wellbeing.



# 1.Social

There are a number of elements that make up the social determinants of health: from family situation, early childhood circumstances, and support from social connections, to housing, working conditions and employment<sup>34</sup>. The protective and adverse nature of each of these elements is outlined in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1 - The effect of social determinants on health**

Social element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Family situation</b> <sup>35</sup>	High-functioning, cohesive and supportive relationships	High stress environment Socioeconomic disadvantage Presence of violence and abuse
<b>Early childhood</b> <sup>36, 37, 38</sup>	Preconception - mother's health and diet Preschool education/programs Quality of relationships	Unhealthy learned behaviours Deprivation
<b>Housing</b> <sup>39, 40, 41, 42</sup>	Strong structural integrity Home ownership Quality infrastructure provides shelter, safety, security and privacy Appropriate for family unit	Overcrowding Insecure housing Unaffordable housing Homelessness Inadequate supply and poor conditions of social housing
<b>Working conditions</b> <sup>43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48</sup>	Secure, full-time arrangement Strong social connections in the workplace	Exposure to harmful substances & injury risks Underemployment Working excessively long hours Psychologically harmful working conditions (stress, bullying, harassment etc.)
<b>Social support and participation</b> <sup>49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54</sup>	Strong social networks outside of family	Lack of support Loneliness Social exclusion

Across the life course, all of the social determinants occur in combination and there is a cumulative effect. For example, the impacts of childhood disadvantage are often experienced over many years and potentially between different generations within a family; research demonstrates that the children of socially disadvantaged parents have a higher risk of being socially disadvantaged themselves<sup>55,56</sup>.

## 2.Environmental

The environmental determinants of health are composed of the natural and the built environments in which we live, work and play<sup>57</sup>. The natural environment is made up of the atmosphere, land, water, oceans, and the diversity of living things<sup>58</sup>, and the built environment is the human made surroundings and the urban form (e.g. shape, size, population density and layout of cities<sup>59</sup>). Both of these factors play an integral role in shaping the health and wellbeing of Australians, especially the natural environment which includes climate change, extreme weather events, ultraviolet (UV) radiation, biodiversity, and air pollution<sup>60</sup>.

**Table 2 - The effect of environmental determinants on health**

Natural environment element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Climate change and extreme weather events</b> <sup>61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67</sup>	Renewable energy sources Increased greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere Preparedness for bushfires, violent storms, heavy rainfall & flooding Heatwave response planning Sustainable food systems	Increased atmospheric greenhouse gases Increased intensity and/or frequency of heat waves and drought Increased fire weather conditions Increased bushfires, violent storms, heavy rainfall events & flooding
<b>UV radiation</b> <sup>68, 69</sup>	Vitamin D production	Carcinogenic
<b>Biodiversity</b> <sup>70, 71, 72</sup>	Regulates climate Filters air and water Enables soil formation Mitigates the impact of natural disasters	Rapidly declining planetary biodiversity Increasing impact of climate change Habitat fragmentation and degradation Invasive species
<b>Air pollution</b> <sup>73, 74, 75, 76, 77</sup>	n/a	Increased presence of fine airborne particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ) Carcinogenic Major single health events i.e. thunderstorm asthma Extreme localised events (bushfires, dust storms)
<b>Vector borne diseases</b> <sup>78, 79, 80, 81</sup>	Increased blood and bodily fluid safety Prophylaxis and preventive medication treatment, including immunisation Increased food safety	Changes in climate: extending the geographic spread and lengthening the transmission seasons of vector borne diseases; and increasing the likelihood of food- and water-borne disease
Built environment element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Urban design</b> <sup>82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87</sup>	Low population density Contact & connection with nature Protection from the elements Social engagement	Increased car use Loss of agricultural land & green spaces Urban heat island effect Unaffordable housing in city centres leading to socioeconomic inequalities
<b>Walkability</b> <sup>88, 89, 90, 91, 92</sup>	Neighbourhoods within walkable distances of destinations Well-connected streets High residential densities Increased physical activity	Low public transport options Non-diverse land use
<b>Transport</b> <sup>93, 94, 95</sup>	Increased access to resources and facilities needed for a healthy life Promotes and supports active travel	Car dependence, Traffic accidents Traffic congestion, Car-related expenses Promotes sedentary behaviour Reduction of natural space Affects greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, air pollution, environmental noise
<b>Green and public open spaces</b> <sup>96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101</sup>	Social interaction Increased physical activity levels Community connections Positive mental health and wellbeing Reduced social isolation	Decreased sense of safety Decreased physical activity and increased screen time for children
<b>Food environments</b> <sup>102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109</sup>	Closer proximity to supermarkets Access to urban agriculture and community gardens	Increased density and location of fast food outlets Density and location of alcohol outlets Marketing and product placement of discretionary items in supermarkets
<b>Water resources</b> <sup>110, 111</sup>	Reliable and safe drinking water and wastewater services	Poorly maintained water and wastewater infrastructures Infrastructure that routinely fails

## 3. Structural

There are structural barriers in Australia that inhibit equitable access to health supporting behaviours and healthcare. Some social and population groups are better serviced by health infrastructure than other groups or communities, which can lead to or amplify health inequalities<sup>112</sup>. These barriers include: the cost of healthcare and user fees; the availability of timely and quality services; systemic racism and discrimination; health literacy levels, and geographic location<sup>113</sup>. Access to healthcare as well as access to quality health care is a particular issue for rural and remote communities<sup>114, 115</sup>.

For some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there are a number of historical and cultural factors, including racism and discrimination, colonisation and colonialism, and the Stolen Generations, that are having an ongoing impact on their health and wellbeing<sup>116</sup>. The effects of these factors are evident today in reduced employment and educational opportunities, inequitable living conditions and cultural dislocation<sup>117, 118</sup>, all of which influence health outcomes.

**Table 3** - *The effect of structural determinants on health*

Structural element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Healthcare costs</b> <sup>119, 120, 121</sup>	Universal health care	Constrained by income Out of pocket costs
<b>Service provision</b> <sup>122, 123, 124</sup>	Receive timely and quality care for all health needs	Long appointment waiting period Poor access to appropriate services, including specialists and allied health
<b>Systemic attitudes and practices</b> <sup>125, 126, 127</sup>	Access to culturally appropriate, safe and responsive care	Racism and discrimination resulting in the provision of low quality healthcare Avoidance of healthcare settings by people requiring care
<b>Health literacy</b> <sup>128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134</sup>	Crucial to effective self-care Can access, understand, appraise and use information to make informed health-related decisions	Low health literacy linked with poor health across the life course Reduced capacity to engage in self-care and preventive health care Increased healthcare costs and hospitalisations
<b>Geographic location</b> <sup>135</sup>	High quality, affordable and locally available health care	Lack of locally available health care across a range of primary and acute care settings Critical shortages of health care professionals

## 4. Economic

Economic determinants are some of the most influential factors affecting health and wellbeing. These determinants include education, employment, occupation, and income<sup>136</sup>. These factors, together with the social factors, commonly identify an individual's socioeconomic position within society<sup>137</sup>.

**Table 4** - *The effect of economic determinants on health*

Economic element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Education</b> <sup>138, 139, 140</sup>	Higher skilled jobs Higher income Understanding & implementing preventive health messaging Stronger health literacy	Greater disadvantage leading to higher mortality rates amongst poorly educated Australians
<b>Employment and occupation</b> <sup>141, 142, 143, 144</sup>	Sense of purpose Job security Financial security Social status Personal development	Unemployment Reduced income Underemployment
<b>Income</b> <sup>145, 146</sup>	Higher standard of living Greater choice in food availability and quality, housing, physical activity, social participation, and health care	Loss of income from poor health Higher mortality rates amongst lower income earners Social inequality



## 5. Cultural

The cultural determinants of health are integral to understanding and improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as the CALD community<sup>147</sup>.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this perspective takes a strengths-based approach and acknowledges that stronger connections to culture and country are vital for stronger individual and collective identities<sup>148, 149</sup>.

As identified in the Mayi Kuwayu literature review, there are six overarching domains for describing the cultural determinants of health that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people<sup>153, 154</sup>. These include: Connection to Country; Family, kinship and community; Indigenous beliefs and knowledge; Cultural expression and continuity; Indigenous language; and Self-determination and leadership<sup>155, 156</sup>. As this is a strengths-based approach, only the protective factors of each domain will be highlighted in the table below.

**Table 5** - *The effect of cultural determinants on health*

Cultural domain <sup>157, 158</sup>	Protective
<b>Connection to Country</b>	Spiritual connection Health and traditional foods Living on Country Land rights and autonomy Caring for Country
<b>Family, kinship and community</b>	Family and kinship Community
<b>Indigenous beliefs and knowledge</b>	Spiritual and religious beliefs Traditional knowledge Traditional healing Knowledge transmission and continuity
<b>Cultural expression and continuity</b>	Identity Cultural practices Art and music
<b>Indigenous language</b>	Impacts of language on health Language revitalisation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language education
<b>Self-determination and leadership</b>	Cultural safety Self-determination and wellbeing Leadership

With almost half of all Australians being born overseas or having one or both parents born overseas, culture also plays a strong role in the health and wellbeing of CALD communities<sup>159, 160</sup>. Some of the protective factors outlined in Table 5 are also influential for CALD communities, including: self-determination and leadership; cultural expression and continuity; and family, kinship and community. There are also a number of other protective factors including: access to interpreting services; respect for cultural differences and beliefs, including spirituality; shared decision-making; and the availability of accessible and quality health information<sup>161, 162</sup>. However, factors such as discrimination, racism, and poor health literacy have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of Australians who identify as CALD<sup>163, 164</sup>.

## 6. Biomedical

There are a number of personal biomedical factors that contribute to the risk of an individual developing a serious chronic health condition such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and chronic kidney disease<sup>165</sup>. The factors include: blood pressure; high blood glucose levels; overweight and obesity; and elevated blood cholesterol. There is a strong relationship between biomedical factors and behavioural risk factors (i.e. physical inactivity, tobacco use, poor diet), with the effects of each amplifying when they co-occur in an individual<sup>166</sup>. Social factors, such as financial and occupational stress, also affect biomedical factors.

The table below outlines only the detrimental aspects of the biomedical factors, as having normal blood pressure, blood glucose levels, and being within a normal weight range all enable an individual to live as long as possible in good health.

**Table 6** - *The effect of biomedical determinants on health*

Biomedical element	Adverse
<b>Blood pressure</b> <sup>167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173</sup>	High blood pressure increases risk of chronic conditions e.g. CVD, stroke, diabetes, dementia, hypertensive diseases, kidney disease Low blood pressure is a risk factor for glaucoma
<b>Blood glucose levels</b> <sup>174, 175, 176, 177</sup>	High blood glucose is a risk factor for diabetes, CVD, retinopathy, kidney disease
<b>Weight range</b> <sup>178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188</sup>	Overweight and obesity increases risk of diabetes, cancer, asthma, depression, and adverse outcomes during pregnancy such as preeclampsia and stillbirth Underweight increases risk of CVD, stroke, heart attack, atrial fibrillation, infection, and adverse outcomes in pregnancy such as preterm delivery and low birthweight
<b>Blood cholesterol</b> <sup>189</sup>	High blood cholesterol is associated with ischaemic heart disease
<b>Genetics, epigenetics and telomere biology</b> <sup>190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198</sup>	Increased risk of cancer due to genetic changes to telomeres Increased risk of alcoholism, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease and Alzheimer's disease due to genetic predisposition Changes in epigenetics leading to increased risk of cancer, a weakened immune system, and affecting a newborn's genetic predisposition to disease Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are at increased risk of adverse epigenetic implications as a result of colonisation and intergenerational trauma





## 7. Commercial

The commercial determinants of health are defined as factors that influence health which stem from the profit motive<sup>199</sup>. In addition, these also encompass the strategies and approaches used to promote products and/or choices that are detrimental to an individual's health<sup>200</sup>. There are four main ways that corporate influence is exerted: marketing and advertising; corporate political activities (i.e. lobbying); corporate social responsibility strategies; and supply chains<sup>201</sup>.

Consideration of the commercial determinants of health is critical to establishing effective approaches to preventive health, as individuals have limited control over their circumstances and what they are exposed to in their everyday life<sup>202</sup>.

**Table 7** - *The effect of commercial determinants on health*

Commercial element	Protective	Adverse
<b>Marketing and advertising</b> <sup>203, 204, 205, 206, 207</sup>	Social marketing promotes public health and health promotion messaging	Promotion of unhealthy products Enhances desirability and acceptability of unhealthy products
<b>Corporate political activities</b> <sup>208, 209</sup>	The provision of goods and services such as health facilities, schools or other collective goods, especially in political environments where these goods are underprovided	Lobbying Political donations Barrier to public health policy Shapes the social environment
<b>Corporate social responsibility strategies</b> <small>210, 211</small>	Add meaningful benefit to society by addressing a need	Enhances public perception and credibility of organisations who don't have health at the heart of their products or services
<b>Supply chains</b> <sup>212, 213</sup>	Development of health-enhancing products	Resistance of inclusion of features that enhance health due to cost Development of products that are detrimental to health

The commercial sector could play a pivotal role in positively shaping the health outcomes of Australians by aligning their strategies to the health and wellbeing goals of society<sup>214, 215</sup>.

### Target populations

There are a number of different groups within society who experience a disproportionate burden of disease, leading to differences in health outcomes and life expectancy. This inequitable burden of disease is not due to personal fault or responsibility, rather, it is largely avoidable. The WHO recognises that the main causes are a result of social inequality and social disadvantage<sup>217</sup>. While individuals from these groups may not be physically ill, they are often unable to fully participate in their health and/or resisting or recovering from a crisis or illness. This is due to a multitude of reasons, including the wider determinants outlined above.

These groups include, but are not limited to, the following communities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, queer or questioning people and other sexuality and gender diverse people and/or intersex people (LGBTQI)
- people with mental illness
- people of low socioeconomic status
- people with disability
- rural, regional and remote

The needs of each group are diverse and there is no one size fits all approach to improving health equity and the communities' overall health outcomes. People may identify as belonging to one or more of these population groups, and as such, may have compounding health and wellbeing experiences that must be considered. It is also important to recognise that these population groups all have inherent strengths and resilience. Many people who identify within these groups are thriving in spite of the challenges they face. Shared decision-making, strategic partnerships and involving people with lived experience at the heart of policy development and implementation are key to creating meaningful change.

# Protecting our health

Prevention works and provides financial gains



# What is prevention

In the context of health, prevention includes taking measures to keep people healthy and well and to avoid the onset of illness, disease or injury. For many of us, prevention is ingrained in our daily habits and actions; hand washing helps to prevent the spread of infection; a nutritious diet and regular physical activity improves our physical, mental health and wellbeing; wearing a hat and applying sunscreen protects against the development of skin cancer; and wearing seatbelts in the car reduces the chance of injury or death.

The WHO defines prevention as “approaches and activities aimed at reducing the likelihood that a disease or disorder will affect an individual, interrupting or slowing the progress of the disorder or reducing disability”<sup>219</sup>. The goal of prevention is to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the entire population, while simultaneously reducing health disparities between target population groups and the general population.

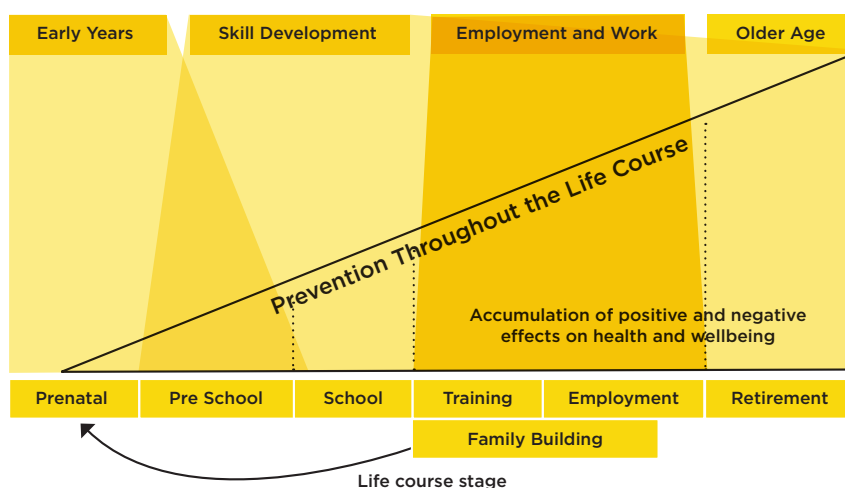
There are several of types of prevention, which are categorised based on the stage of health (or ill health) at which they are implemented. Even once a person becomes unwell, there are preventive actions that can be taken to prevent disease progression and/or prevent concurrent illnesses from occurring. The types of prevention are<sup>220, 221, 222</sup>:

1. Primordial prevention focusses on addressing the wider determinants of health by reducing the environmental factors, hazards and social factors that negatively affect health. This includes the creation of enabling environments that promote health through the built environment by encouraging healthy behaviours such as physical activity, and providing access to healthy food, clean air,

water and sanitation.

2. Primary prevention focusses on reducing risk factors to prevent a disease or disorder before it arises. This includes: behavioural factors such as low physical activity levels and poor dietary intake; biomedical factors such as overweight and obesity and high blood pressure; and specific protective factors such as immunisation.
3. Secondary prevention focusses on the early detection and best practice management of a disease or disorder to reduce deterioration and long-term effects. This includes identifying people at risk of ill-health through screening programs, general health examinations, as well as the identification of complications and co-morbidities.
4. Tertiary prevention focuses on reducing harms in people with a disease or disorder and minimising their functional impairment. This includes management of co-morbidities, complications and associated disabilities.
5. Quaternary prevention focuses on reducing harms caused by medical interventions for a disease or disorder<sup>223, 224</sup>.

The different approaches to preventive health recognise that there are many individual and collective factors that influence health. The health of an individual is determined largely by the social, environmental, cultural, structural, economic and commercial environments experienced throughout life, as well as various individual attributes like genetic make-up. Many of these factors are interrelated and evolve over time, as described in further detail within the ‘Knowing the causes’ chapter. To promote health and wellbeing across Australia, all of these factors must be considered in preventive health



**Figure 2** – The life course approach – adapted from Marmot and Goldblatt et al. 2010<sup>226</sup>

action in order to reduce the health inequalities and inequities that exist, especially for target populations. Preventive health measures also need to address health at all stages across the life course – from prenatal, infancy and childhood, to adolescence, adulthood, and through to older age. Consistent with the life course approach adopted in other key plans and strategies, such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, this approach takes into account the different positive and negative health impacts through life that people encounter and acknowledges our changing health needs as we age<sup>225</sup> (Figure 2).

Prevention efforts can focus on the whole population. They can also be effective when they are targeted to different sub-populations or communities, based on need<sup>227, 228, 229</sup>:

- Universal prevention is a broad approach for the entire population e.g. fluoridated water.
- Selective prevention focusses on people with a greater risk of developing a disease or disorder, e.g. breast cancer screening for females between 50-74 years of age.
- Indicated prevention targets people at high risk, e.g. injecting drug users or prisoners.

Australia has an excellent record of accomplishment in health prevention, however spending on preventive health is still low. In 2018-19, 1.5% of total health expenditure was spent on public health<sup>230</sup>, which is significantly lower than other countries with similar health systems such as Canada (over 6%) and the UK (over 5%)<sup>231</sup>. Of the 31 OECD countries who reported on prevention spending in 2013, Australia ranked: 16th in terms of per capita spending on prevention; 19th in terms of share of GDP allocated to prevention; and 20th in terms of share of overall spending on health allocated to prevention<sup>232</sup>. A greater investment in preventive health would allow for more initiatives that can protect the health of Australians before they become unwell. Prevention doesn't only take place in health settings such as at general practices and health services, but also in homes, schools, workplaces, community organisations and in social and cultural settings. Many of the wider determinants of health are outside of the health sector, which means approaches to prevention must be considered across sectors, and in all policies across governments. Only a collective and cohesive effort across sectors will provide the full extent of work required to create and enhance the types of environments needed to support individuals to lead healthy lives.



## The value of prevention

The benefits of prevention extend beyond reducing chronic conditions and living longer, healthier lives. Prevention generates benefits not only by reducing pressure on the health budget, but by also increasing workforce participation and productivity, and improving the health of future generations<sup>233</sup>. To date, Australia's preventive health initiatives have shown how dramatically prevention can positively impact our health. These include our immunisation and cancer screening programs, our tobacco and UV exposure reduction initiatives, the introduction of gun laws, the success in containing the spread of HIV, and the introduction of safe driving measures such as compulsory seatbelt use in cars, random breath testing, and speed monitoring interventions (see 'Adapting our response' chapter for further information).

Preventable ill-health is putting enormous pressure on the Australian healthcare budget. In 2015-16, the cost of healthcare goods and services was \$10.4 billion for cardiovascular diseases, \$8.9 billion for injuries and \$8.9 billion for mental and substance use disorders<sup>234</sup>. By preventing these conditions, governments can avoid future costs to the healthcare budget related to managing the complex treatment and care of these conditions. However, healthcare costs are not the only economic impact of preventable ill-health. Social costs also need to be considered, which include the costs associated with household expenditure (e.g. the cost of purchasing tobacco products), decreased



productivity costs (e.g. increased absenteeism and presenteeism), and law enforcement costs (e.g. police attendances in relation to drug offences). In 2015-16, the social costs of opioid use and tobacco use were estimated at \$15.76 billion and \$136.9 billion respectively<sup>235</sup>, and in 2010, the estimated social cost of alcohol misuse was \$14.35 billion<sup>236</sup>. Reducing the impact of these risk factors has the benefit of significantly reducing pressure on the health budget, as well as putting money back into the pockets of Australians and increasing workplace participation, productivity and quality of life.

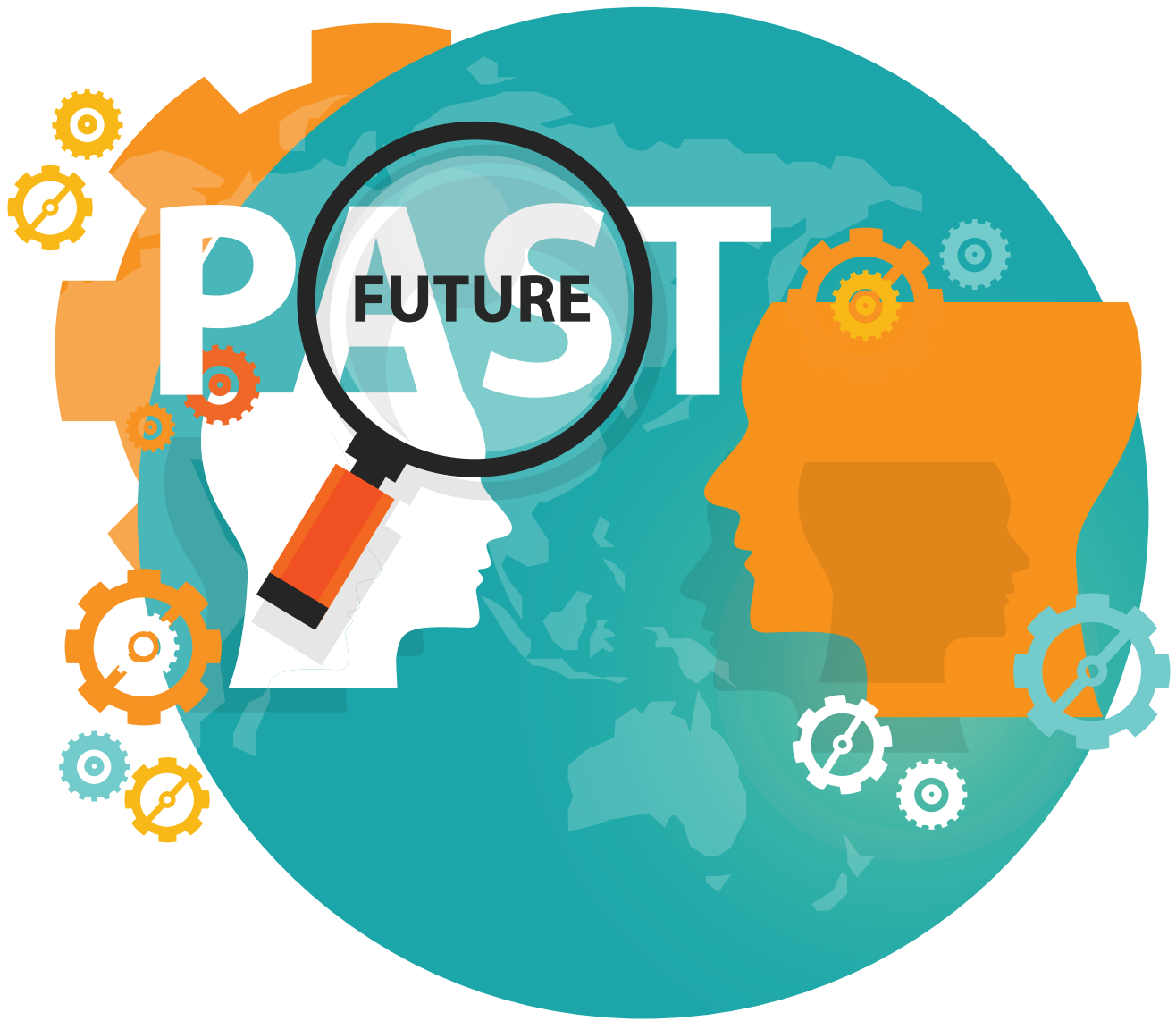
Chronic conditions are becoming increasingly prevalent and pose a significant challenge to the health system<sup>237</sup>. Chronic conditions cost Australia an estimated \$27 billion in direct healthcare costs, which is over a third (36%) of the national health budget<sup>238</sup>. Without intervention, the impact of chronic conditions will continue to grow. Research suggests that if no additional action is taken to tackle the increase in obesity, it will cost Australia a total of \$88 billion in direct and indirect costs over a 10-year period<sup>239</sup>. Interventions to combat this will not only improve the health of individuals, but will reduce costs in the long term.

There is clear evidence that many preventive health interventions are cost-effective and offer good value for money, in both Australian and international contexts<sup>240, 241, 242</sup>. In the 30 years between 1970 and 2000, at least \$2 billion in net benefits has been gained through health promotion campaigns aimed at reducing tobacco consumption<sup>243</sup>. The 2010 Assessing Cost-Effectiveness (ACE) in Prevention study demonstrated that prevention interventions in Australia can create savings by offsetting the

cost of the interventions by the savings that result from a reduced need to manage and treat diseases<sup>244</sup>. By introducing tax increases on tobacco (30% increase), alcohol (30% increase) and unhealthy foods (10% increase), alongside mandatory salt limits on processed foods, it was estimated that \$6 billion of net savings could be made to the health system through a reduction in direct healthcare costs<sup>245</sup>. The evidence from previous, successful preventive health initiatives need to be utilised to direct preventive health investment in Australia to where it can be used most efficiently and effectively, and to enable the greatest gains.

The greatest gains for prevention can be demonstrated when preventive health action starts early in life, as health in-utero and during the perinatal and early childhood stages creates the foundations of adult health<sup>246</sup>. Social, emotional, cognitive and physical wellbeing later in life is underpinned by healthy physical development and emotional support during the first years of life<sup>247</sup>. For example, three factors during infancy are shown to impact weight gain later in life: how rapidly an infant gains weight, initiation and length of breastfeeding, and the duration of infant sleep<sup>248</sup>. Positive health and wellbeing during early childhood and adolescence is also critical to healthy ageing. Nutrition in early life plays a key role in the risk of developing musculoskeletal problems such as osteoporosis, sarcopenia, and osteoarthritis<sup>249</sup>.

Preventive health action can also work to raise the health of target populations to an equitable level. Australia has made valuable gains in terms of reducing the burden of some chronic conditions, but there is considerable work that still needs to be done for high-risk and target population groups. If action were taken to address the wider determinants of health, then it is estimated that 170,000 extra Australians could enter the workforce, generating \$8 billion in extra earnings, annual savings of \$4 billion in welfare support payments could be made, and 60,000 fewer people would need to be admitted to hospital annually resulting in savings of \$2.3 billion in hospital expenditure<sup>250</sup>. Furthermore, 5.5 million fewer Medicare services would be needed each year, resulting in annual savings of \$273 million, and 5.3 million fewer Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme scripts would need to be filled each year, resulting in annual savings of \$184.5 million each year<sup>251</sup>. The evidence is clear; tackling influencing factors outside of the health system is crucial for improving the health of target populations and benefitting all Australians overall.



## Adapting our response

One eye on the past and one eye on the future

## Learning from our past success in prevention

Australia is recognised as an international leader in many areas of prevention. There is much that we can learn from our past success to guide our future strategy. Success in prevention has not occurred by chance. It has involved sustained commitment by governments, passionate non-government organisations, community members and a determined response by members of the public. It has also involved long-term, multi-sectoral and multi-lateral partnerships to achieve continued success.

There are many positive stories in Australia when it comes to prevention, particularly our experience in tobacco control, our response to the HIV epidemic, skin cancer prevention, road safety, our introduction of national cancer screening programs, and our innovation in immunisation. The following vignettes provide key examples of preventive health success in the past, and highlight key learnings that are critical to guide Australia's future action.

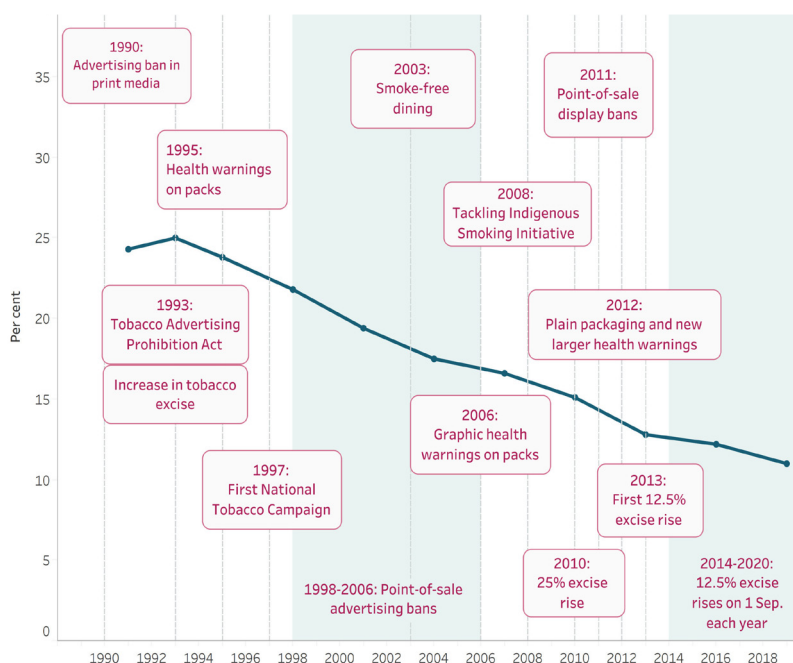
### Vignette 1: Tobacco Control in Australia

Smoking prevalence in Australia has significantly fallen over the past 20 years due to successful preventive health measures<sup>252</sup>. Since 1995, the proportion of adults who are daily smokers has decreased from 23.8% to 13.8% in 2017-18<sup>253</sup>. Young people (aged 18-24) are more likely to have never smoked than a decade ago (75% compared with 34%)<sup>254</sup>.

**Figure 3** outlines the success Australia has had in reducing tobacco use and the proportion of Australians smoking. This important example demonstrates the need for a continuous and comprehensive approach. Success has been achieved through a range of interventions including taxation, indoor and outdoor smoking bans, and product regulation, as well as support from health services and public education campaigns. The implementation of these strategies, combined with high quality evaluations and data from continuous monitoring, is widely viewed as a world-leading case study for achieving sustained public health outcomes.

Through the implementation of preventive health measures outlined in Figure 3, fewer Australians have died prematurely due to smoking, and there has been a reduction in overall healthcare and productivity costs<sup>255</sup>.

Although significant progress has been made, tobacco remains the leading cause of cancer in Australia, contributing 22% of cancer burden, as well as contributing 41% of respiratory diseases and 12% of cardiovascular diseases<sup>256</sup>. Tobacco use also remains a leading burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ongoing effort is essential in order to continue the downward trend for Australia's current and future generations.



**Figure 3 - Prevalence of daily tobacco smoking in Australians aged >14 years old**

Source: Tobacco in Australia, Facts and Issue Introduction & Chapters 11, 11A, 13, 14 & 15 and National Drug Strategy Household Surveys, 1991 to 2016, AIHW 2017



**Vignette 2: Skin Cancer Prevention**

Compared to the 1980s, Australians today have an increased awareness of the importance of sun protection. The use of sunscreen, hats and protective clothing has increased<sup>258</sup>. The rate of young people preferring a suntan has also dropped from 60% to 38%<sup>259</sup>. Over recent decades, there has been a significant reduction in melanoma rates in Australians aged less than 40 years<sup>260</sup>, with many aware of the associated harm related to skin cancer and taking the initiative to seek medical checks. For many older Australians, the damage of the past is hard to reverse, but evidence suggests that improved sun protection in middle age can successfully reduce skin cancers later in life<sup>261</sup>.

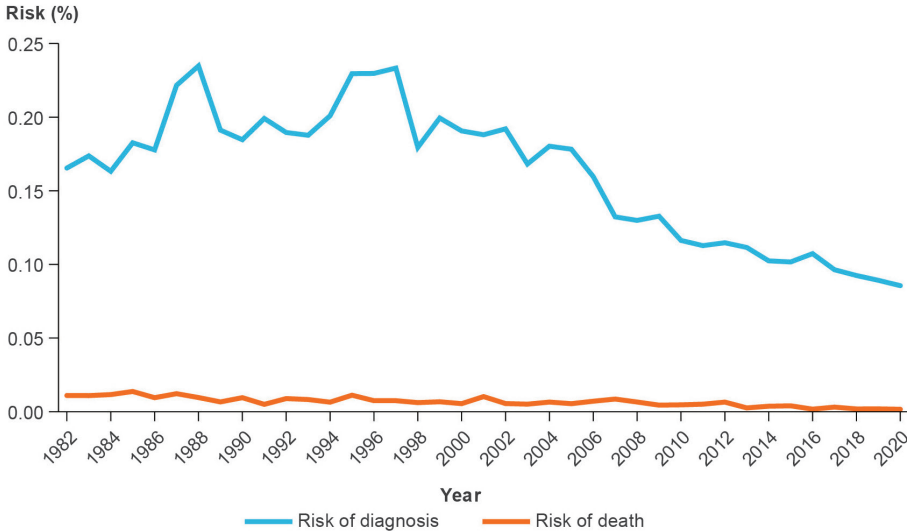
There have been a number of educational skin cancer prevention campaigns and programs implemented in Australia over the past few decades, and they have successfully contributed to much of the attitudinal and behavioural shift demonstrated by Australians. This includes, for example, the *Slip! Slop! Slap! Seek! Slide!* campaigns and the *SunSmart Program* in primary school settings. These preventive health initiatives have contributed to saving many lives and reducing the incidence of skin cancers.

Critical to these achievements has been the establishment of strategic relationships between partners from all levels of government, non-government organisations and communities, which are active in a wide variety of population and community settings<sup>262</sup>.

While our progress has been substantial, there is still much to be done. Like tobacco control, sustained and ongoing cancer prevention efforts are critical to embed and reinforce health promoting behaviours and to increase participation in cancer screening programs for the early detection of cancer.

**Figure 4 - Incidence rates of melanomas in Australia in persons ages 0-39 years**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017) Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality books, 2017





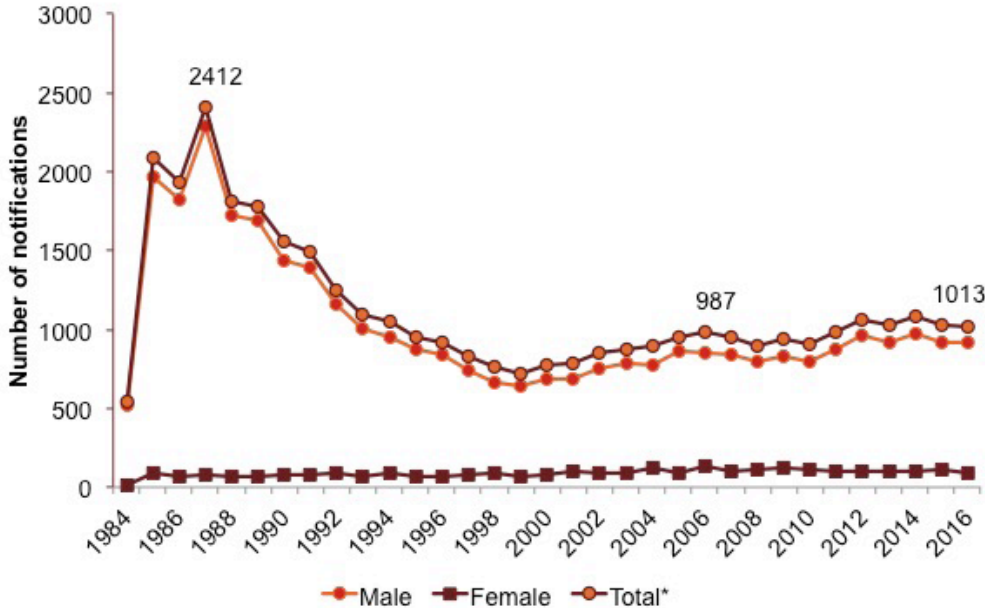
### Vignette 3: HIV and AIDS

Since the first cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the discovery of human immunodeficiency virus infection (HIV) 35 years ago, and the subsequent HIV epidemic in the 1980s, Australia has made a concerted and sustained effort to respond to the virus. This has included vital awareness-raising campaigns, needle and syringe programs and other behavioural changes among target populations. The Australian response initiated one of the most rapid and sustained changes in community behaviour in Australia’s health promotion history<sup>263</sup>. This response is regarded internationally as a world-leading model of best practice.

Australia has been extremely fortunate to have a well-funded, bipartisan, collaborative response to HIV for over thirty years now. This has resulted in internationally low levels of infection, which makes it possible for Australia to consider a variety of ways to end HIV<sup>264</sup>.

Key lessons have been learnt throughout the HIV public health response, including the need: to harness community mobilisation and action; for sustained participation, for investment and leadership; partnership; to commit to social, political and structural approaches for prevention; and to build and use evidence from multiple sources to continuously adapt and evolve<sup>265</sup>.


Figure 5 - New HIV diagnoses in Australia, 1984-2017, by sex





\* Includes transgender people and people for whom data on sex was missing.


## Key Learnings

The vignettes above highlight Australia's preventive health achievements in several areas of health. It is important we learn from these achievements; lessons from history not only act as reminders about what it was like in the past, but they also help to inform and guide future action. Our successes so far should be celebrated, but we cannot become complacent. Prevention policy needs to build on and enhance these previous successes in public health to not only improve health for all Australians, but to also reduce health inequalities for groups experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, people living in remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples<sup>266</sup>. The key themes emerging when exploring past successes and failures include:


 **Success comes from sustained and coordinated action:** Solving complex public health challenges is not easy and there is no 'silver bullet' solution. Our experience in reducing tobacco use, in HIV prevention and in reducing road traffic injuries has demonstrated the importance of combining different forms of government action with meaningful engagement from many sectors, to achieve incremental change. This includes formal partnerships and shared decision-making with non-government organisations and communities, underpinned by sustained public education.

 **To have real impact, prevention needs to be financed:** Although effective public health provides economic saves for our health system and economy in the long term, prevention efforts need to be sustainably financed if they are to have a real impact on population health.


 **Healthy environments support healthy living:** Several factors are critical to enabling people to lead healthy lives. These include: the way our cities and neighbourhoods are planned; environmental factors such as weather events and air quality; commercial influences; availability and access to healthy food choices; our workplaces; and safe environments for physical activity in our communities. Creating supportive and enabling environments for health is a collective responsibility of communities, individuals, organisations, governments at all levels, the private sector and industry.

 **Health is for all Australians:** Some groups in our community have poorer health or particular health needs – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those experiencing social and economic disadvantage, those living in rural and remote areas, people with disability, LGBTIQ people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Whole of population initiatives, policies and programs, are needed, complemented by additional support for those who experience the greatest inequity of outcomes. We have learned that a co-design approach with communities in the development, delivery and evaluation of services produces the best outcomes.

 **The health sector is enabled to lead by example:** In many of these public health successes in the past, the health sector in Australia led by example. Moving forward the health sector should be enabled to continue to make the most of every opportunity to improve prevention to create supportive and enabling environments for health. This should be done both within the health system and through partnerships with other sectors.

 **Data, research and evidence are important drivers:** We know a great deal about what works in prevention, but still have much to learn – especially in designing effective interventions for populations with the greatest need. There is a need to develop capacity, tools and networks to support prevention research and strengthen research-policy pathways. There is also a need to ensure data are available and accessible at the local level.

 **Adapting to the future:** History tells us that we should always be adaptable and responsive to emerging issues and the benefits and impacts of evolving technology – such as newly emerging infectious diseases, a changing climate and personalised health treatments.



## Learning from the COVID-19 experience

COVID-19 has been a dominant issue for every Australian in 2020, and the pandemic presents an opportune time to pause and reflect on the many lessons that must be taken from this crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of an adaptable, resilient and agile health system, as well as the need for strong leadership, coordination and communication. It has demonstrated that individuals experiencing vulnerabilities and with preventable chronic conditions are at greater risk of both direct and indirect adverse outcomes. It has also emphasised the importance and benefits of prevention – prevention is much more cost-effective than treatment, both during ordinary times and a pandemic<sup>267</sup>. The National Contact Tracing Review (the Review) supports the need to maintain a focus on preventive public health measures and highlights that the most effective responses have been achieved through long-term investment in public health<sup>268</sup>. The Review also clearly outlined that Australia's public health experts have been instrumental in safely stewarding Australia's response through the COVID-19 pandemic, concluding that a highly qualified public health workforce is vital<sup>269</sup>.

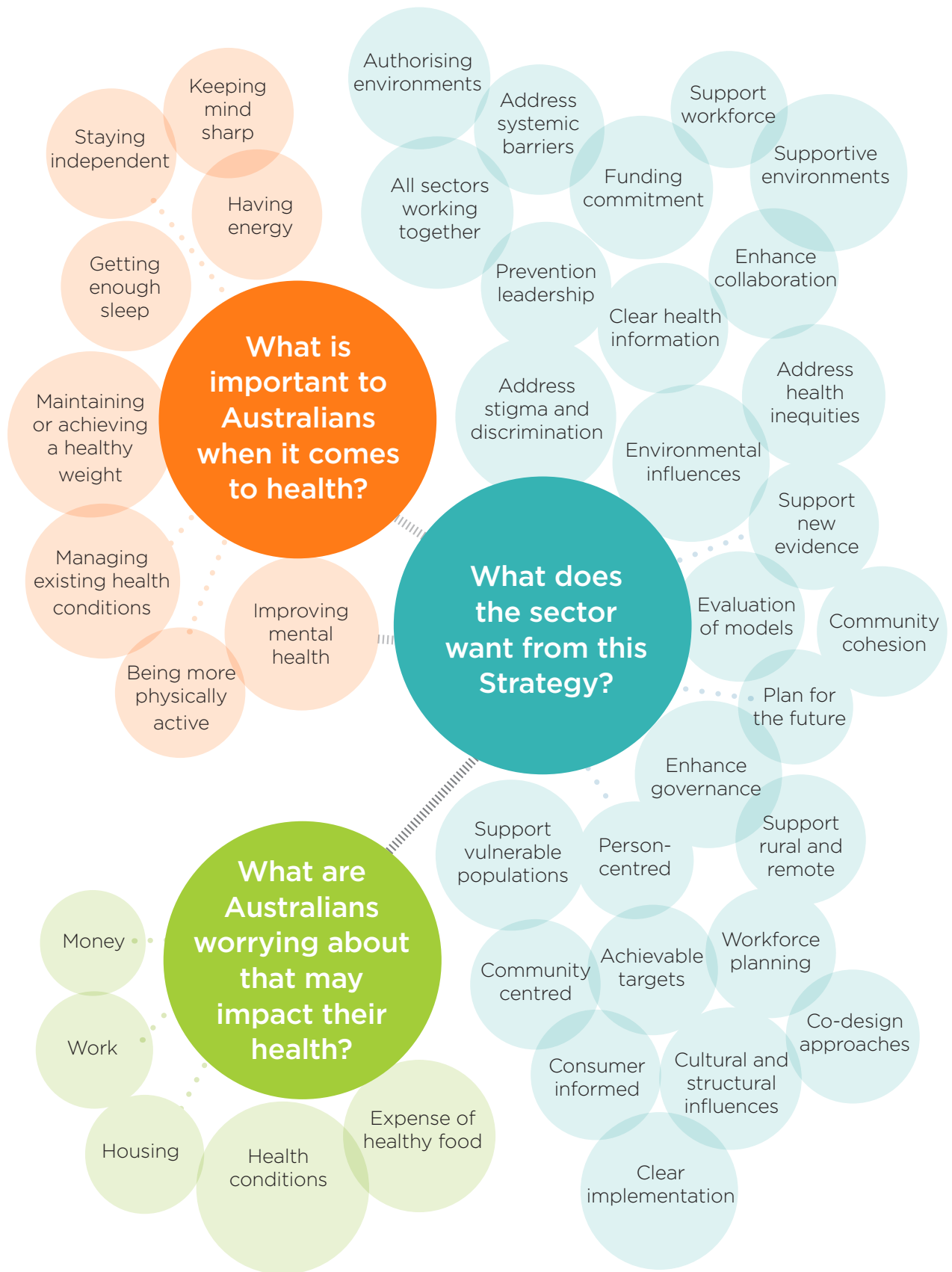
COVID-19 has shown Australians and the world how interconnected our health is, with the risk to some, becoming the risk to many. The pandemic has revealed weak points in how

we think about 'health' or 'public health' and in some instances, how it is funded<sup>270</sup>. Ultimately, it should be about improving the health of communities and the population<sup>271</sup>. Instead, there is a strong emphasis on the health of individuals, and the doctors and medicines that help us to recover when we, as individuals, get sick<sup>272</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that there needs to be a shift in this thinking to a whole of population focussed approach – a collectivist approach that is focussed on preventing disease, injury and illness for all Australians<sup>273</sup>.

COVID-19 has also brought to light the importance of partnership approaches and involving communities in decision making processes. The strength and leadership of the ACCHS sector during the pandemic meant that locally-led, holistic, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate health care continued to be delivered to communities, in spite of lockdowns and other restrictions. This sector-led response has been instrumental in reducing the impact of COVID-19 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to emerge over the next decade. It will be important to understand and learn from these lessons in order to ensure Australia, and the world, are less vulnerable to future public health challenge.

# Listening to the community

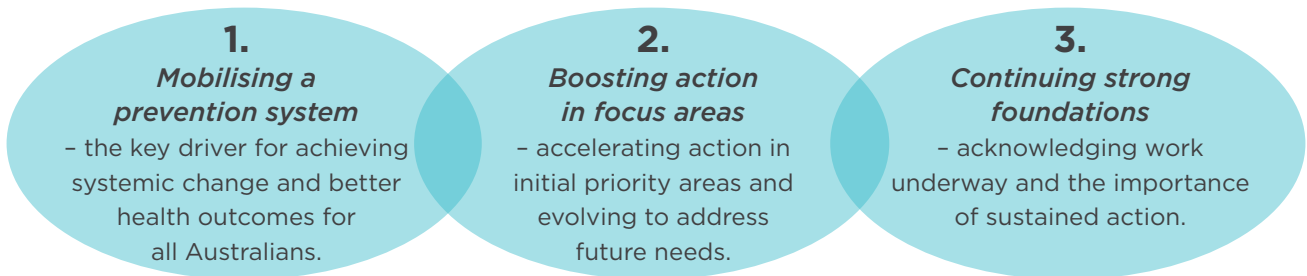


# The Framework for Action

## Achieving the vision and aims

The Framework for Action (the Framework) forms the foundation of this Strategy, providing the strategic and structured approach to achieve better health and wellbeing for all Australians by 2030.

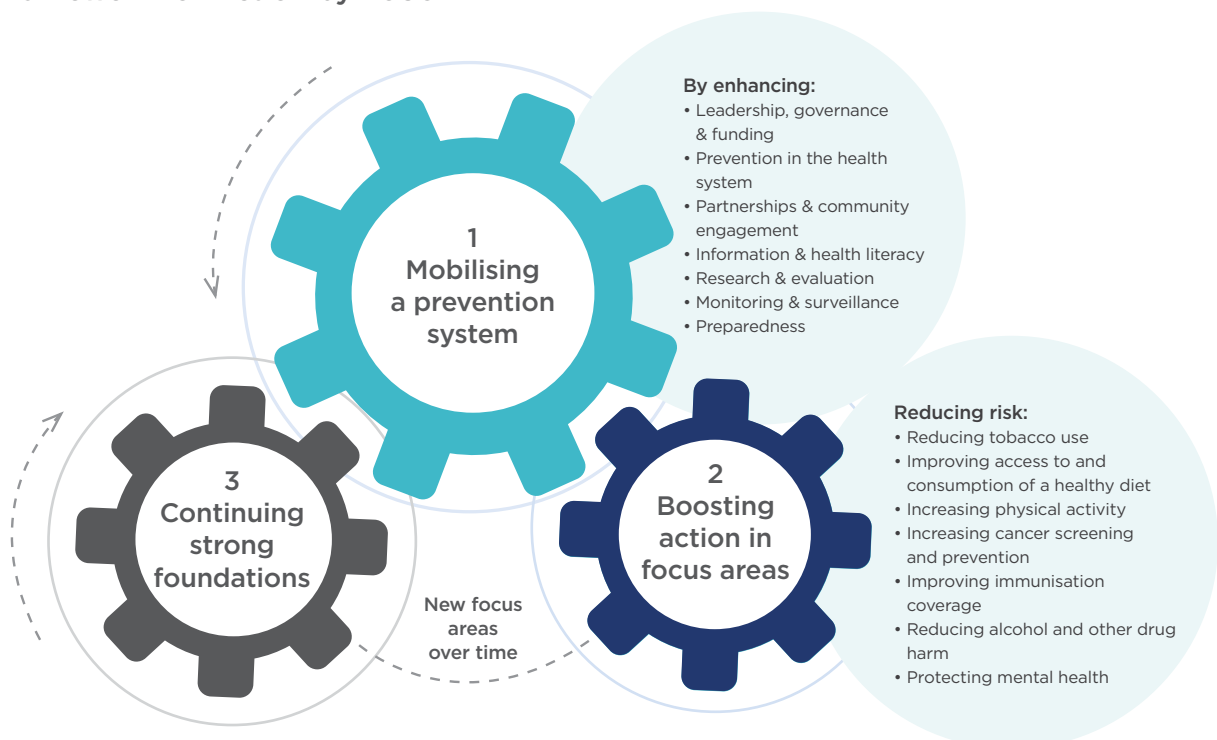
The Framework is composed of three interlinked elements:



The ***Mobilising a prevention system*** element is key to achieving a sustainable prevention system in Australia. By focusing on the system enablers of the prevention system, this will enable long-term improvements in the focus areas as well as support preventive health action which is currently underway. The ***Boosting action in focus areas*** element is composed of a number of initial areas that have been prioritised to achieve early gains in reducing the overall burden in the population. As health issues arise, the Framework allows for new focus areas to be identified and actioned. The ***Continuing strong foundations*** element acknowledges the immense preventive health action already being undertaken across Australia and recognises the importance of this action not only continuing but being enhanced.

Through the implementation of the Framework, the vision and aims of this Strategy will be achieved, with all action underpinned by the overarching principles.

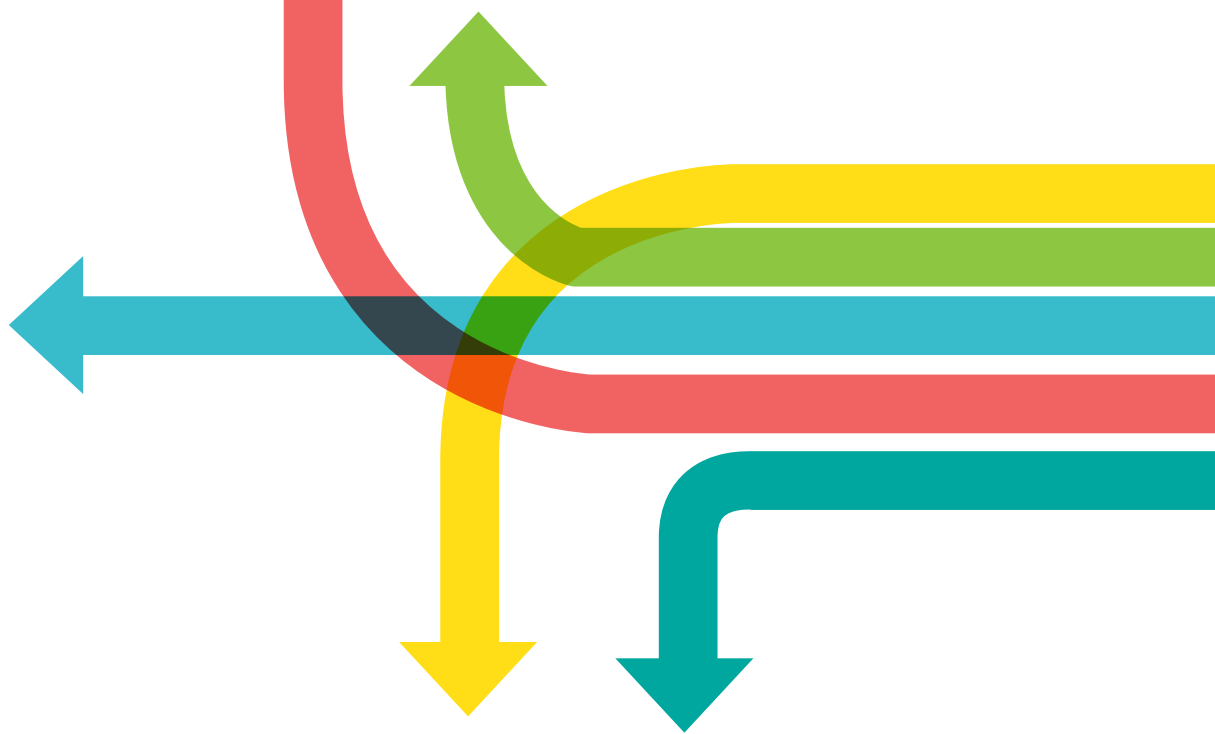
## Framework for Action by 2030





# Mobilising a Prevention System

Looking beyond the individual



## Securing our future

Australia's current health system takes a systematic approach to diagnosing and managing disease in order to deliver health outcomes that are among the best in the world. It is built on evidence, leadership, partnerships and effective monitoring.

This Strategy is designed to deliver an equally strong prevention system. While Australia has a history of world-leading prevention programs, our approach to prevention is often disjointed, not sustained and does not effectively build on locally successful programs to deliver national change. There is a need for a more coordinated and evidence driven approach that can create long-term, sustainable improvements to the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

There are many interconnected factors that contribute to good health, including the wider determinants of health and individual factors. Our approach to prevention must take a systems based approach by recognising and unpacking this complexity and understanding how components of the health system are interrelated. Using systems thinking to tackle complex issues, such as the health and wellbeing of all Australians, enables this Strategy to delve deeper and address the fundamental and interconnected causes of the issue. Governments, organisations and individuals must work together in a coordinated way to drive change from different angles and in dynamic and flexible ways.

Seven system enablers are identified in this Strategy that are critical to creating a more effective and integrated prevention system for Australia over the next 10 years. For the

purposes of this Strategy, the prevention system is defined as the people, processes, activities, settings and structures, and the dynamic relationships between them that can protect, maintain and promote the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families, communities and environments.

The seven enablers to mobilise a prevention system, outlined in more detail from page 32, are:

- 1. Leadership, governance and funding**
- 2. Prevention in the health system**
- 3. Partnerships and community engagement**
- 4. Information and health literacy**
- 5. Research and evaluation**
- 6. Monitoring and surveillance**
- 7. Preparedness**

The system enablers are strongly interconnected, with success in one area driving success in another. For example, 'preparedness' will rely on strong leadership, effective partnerships, accessible and tailored public health messaging, a mobilised public health workforce, research and evaluation to drive evidence-based action, and high-quality monitoring and surveillance systems.

For each system enabler, key quotes from the public consultation of this Strategy are outlined together with the desired Policy achievements by 2030. These achievements provide levers within the health system and across broader sectors, whilst allowing flexibility with implementation across all levels of government, non-government organisations and within the community.




## 1. Leadership, governance and funding

The most effective preventive health efforts in Australia have come from evidence-based approaches that have received sustained investment and commitment by governments, the health sector and the community<sup>274</sup>. Enhanced governance structures are required to create a more resilient prevention system<sup>275</sup>. This includes:


- an independent, expert-led mechanism that will advise the Australian Government on current, emerging and future priorities in prevention; and
- a governance mechanism within Government, and across relevant portfolios, that have an influence on the health and wellbeing of Australians.

These mechanisms need to be underpinned by long-term and sustainable funding.

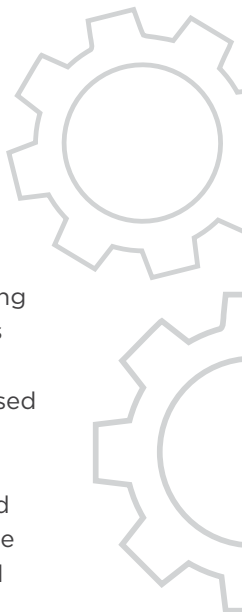
 ***“It is time that funding and governance is ring-fenced for prevention. We need strong, independent institutions and financing and decision-making mechanism.”***

Australia needs to be able to assess, prioritise and direct action towards the best possible initiatives to have the greatest impact on health and ensure


the best use of resources. This mechanism would: provide independent, expert-led, evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of preventive health programs; provide guidance on investment and implementation; enable monitoring of existing and emerging health issues; and enable cross-sectoral collaboration, including shared-decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

 ***“A long-term and sustainable funding mechanism will be critical to success.”***

There is a need to significantly enhance investment in prevention in order to achieve a better balance between treatment and prevention<sup>276</sup>. A long-term, sustainable funding mechanism is essential to achieving the aims of this Strategy, including that *investment in prevention is increased*. It should be recognised that investment in the avoidance of illness, is an investment in the avoidance of future treatment costs. The independent, expert-led governance mechanism would provide advice to Government on how the fund can be used to implement affordable, feasible and cost-effective prevention action.





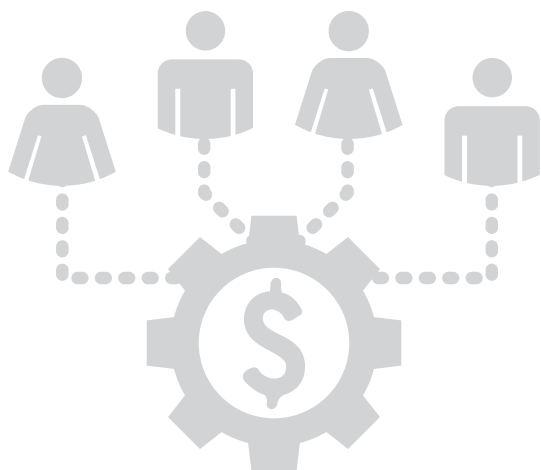
 *“The success of the Strategy will depend on leadership and collaboration both vertically - across national, state and local governments, and horizontally - across multiple sectors and within the health sector itself.”*

Strong leadership across all levels of government is essential to create an authorising and supportive environment for prevention and to greatly strengthen capacity for effective and agile prevention in our health system. Collaboration between sectors, led by the health sector, will result in more successful individual and system based outcomes and ultimately, achieve the aims of this Strategy. The establishment of a formalised governance mechanism for preventive health within the Australian Government is required that brings together relevant portfolios that play a key part in the health of Australians. This collaboration will be essential in implementing effective approaches and providing opportunities to scale up initiatives.

 *“Strongly recommend a stronger focus on the ‘health in all policies’ approach. There needs to be an expectation reset in every sector.”*

The consideration of health influencers and impacts in all policy development has the potential to improve health and reduce inequalities through defined partnerships across different areas of government<sup>277</sup>. Public policies need to be developed and implemented across sectors by examining issues through a health lens, with the co-benefits for all engaged partners considered during the process. This will enable other sectors of government and broader health groups, including ACCHSs, to work in partnership to contribute to the preventive health agenda.

Prevention is everyone’s business. In order to address complex health issues such as obesity, the health of Australians must be considered by all policy makers, both within health and broader government portfolios. Health must also be a key consideration for schools, workplaces, businesses, and community organisations. To achieve the best possible outcomes for Australians, a systemic and structured approach to embedding the consideration of health across all policies is required.




  
Policy achievements by 2030


- The **priorities for preventive health action are informed by a national, independent governance mechanism** that is based on effectiveness and relevance.
- Preventive health and health promotion activities in Australia are sustainably funded through an **ongoing, long-term prevention fund** – rebalancing health action.
- The governance mechanism will provide advice on the **direction of the prevention fund**.
- **A health lens is applied to all policy through ongoing, cross-sectoral partnerships**, led by the health sector, at all levels of governments, to address the determinants of health.

## 2.Prevention in the health system

The key remit of our health system is to promote, protect and enhance the health of the community. This remit spans across community and primary health care including ACCHSs, through to hospitals and residential facilities. Although our health system has a strong focus on the diagnosis and management of disease, it also makes a valuable contribution to disease prevention and health promotion. This Strategy will support the enhancement and expansion of prevention across the health system. The health workforce, including the important role of the public health workforce, will play an integral role in enabling this change, including the delivery of culturally safe prevention efforts.

 ***“Let’s reorientate from an ‘illness system’ to a ‘wellness system.’”***

Most Australians value and act on advice from health care professionals. There is strong evidence that many preventive health interventions delivered within the health system are cost-effective<sup>278</sup>. It is recognised that “supporting clinicians to focus more on preventive and population health can also provide greater professional satisfaction, and reduce the frustration that many doctors feel in being unable to address the underlying cause of many of the health problems they encounter among their patients<sup>279</sup>. There are opportunities to deeply embed prevention as part of routine health service delivery and implementation, including in primary health care, hospitals, community health services and in public health.

 ***“More than ever we need a sustainable public health workforce in Australia - COVID has highlighted this.”***


Although embedding prevention in the health system requires a shift in capacity and capability, through leadership, for all health workers, COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of the public health workforce in Australia<sup>280</sup>. The workforce is integral to the management of current and possible future communicable disease outbreaks, and to address the heavy burden of chronic conditions in Australia<sup>281, 282</sup>. Future public health workforce planning is vital, as is increasing the capability of the overall health workforce, to be effective in prevention.



 ***“Given the diversity of communities, regional planning for prevention needs to be at the heart of the health response.”***

Ensuring linkages at the regional level is crucial in meeting the local health needs of communities and responding rapidly but appropriately to public health issues and threats<sup>283</sup>. There is an opportunity to enhance linkages and build collaboration especially between primary health care providers, community health, Primary Health Networks, Local Health Networks, ACCHSs, non-medical and community groups to address the information needs, behavioural and environmental change required in communities with poorer health and wellbeing. Through these effective linkages, effective referral pathways and coordinated care can be formed to address the social and economic influences on health and wellbeing.



 **“There is a real opportunity for primary health care to be at the forefront of prevention but the infrastructure needs to change to do this properly.”**

A key goal of Australia’s Long Term Health Plan is to make primary health care *“more patient-focussed, more accessible and better able to provide preventive health and management of chronic conditions”*<sup>284</sup>. Part of this goal involves continuity of care and using the strong relationships between GPs and patients as a foundation for person-centred models of primary care delivery<sup>285, 286</sup>. Given the majority of chronic conditions are often preventable, risk assessment and early detection is important to halt or slow disease progression, prevent avoidable long-term complications and hospitalisation, provide treatment at an early stage of disease for better outcomes, and reduce adverse events. Enhancing preventive health capability in primary health care, including both opportunistic and systematic screening, requires current barriers in the system to be addressed.




### Policy achievements by 2030

- **Increased investment in resilient system infrastructure**, particularly service models, workforce roles and capacities and funding levers, enables preventive health to be embedded across the health system.
- The inherent preventive **health capabilities of primary health care professionals**, including GPs, allied health, pharmacists and nurses, are better supported and integrated within health services.
- **The public health workforce is ‘future proofed’** through the enhancement of availability, distribution and of the capacity and skills of the workforce.
- **Improved cultural safety across the Australian health system** to improve access to appropriate and responsive health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the prioritisation of care through ACCHSs.
- **Enhanced continuity of care for patients**, within the primary health care system, is supported through a voluntary enrolment mechanism – allowing practices to plan and monitor individual health risks.
- **Social prescribing is embedded** in the health system at a local level with **a focus on self-care support**.
- **Regional prevention frameworks are established** to achieve sustained collaborative referral and monitoring arrangements.

# 3. Partnerships and community engagement

Partnerships and community lie at the heart of a strong and enduring prevention system that can build and sustain capacity to promote health and prevent illness<sup>287</sup>. With so many of the factors influencing the health of Australians emanating from outside of the health system, multi-sectoral partnerships will be critical to addressing the social, cultural, economic, structural, environmental and commercial determinants of health.

 **“The importance of consumers and consumer groups being recognised as equal participants in health partnerships, to ensure that prevention systems are person centred.”**

There are a wide range of non-government players who have an integral role in improving the health of Australians. This includes ACCHSs, community groups, advocacy groups, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and professional associations. Partnerships must include different sectors that influence health and drive evidence informed changes. This includes transport, urban planning, social services, agriculture, housing and food systems as well as organisations addressing the quality of our air and water.

Local and regional communities, including cultural, ethnic and religious groups also play a vital role in prevention; they understand the local issues and the opportunities for improving health. This Strategy recognises that communities have the skills and ability to take the lead in prevention action, and seeks to enable them by ensuring shared access to the necessary evidence, tools and data. Involving consumers and communities at the heart of policy design and implementation, will more likely result in meaningful, long-term change<sup>288</sup>. Integrating the voices of Australians



with lived experience must be valued and utilised by all levels of government<sup>289, 290</sup>. These partnerships will be of particular importance in addressing the needs of target groups, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (consistent with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap) and Australians from diverse backgrounds. This will be critical to the development of effective and sustainable solutions that meet the diverse needs of the Australian community<sup>291, 292</sup>.

 **“Partnerships action must be protected from undue influence by any form of vested interest.”**

Consistent with the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, public health policies, strategies and multi-sectoral action must be protected from undue influence by any form of vested commercial interest<sup>293</sup>. Real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest must be proactively identified, acknowledged and managed for all aspects of preventive health work, not just in the space of preventing and managing chronic conditions<sup>294</sup>. An evidence-based approach to address these conflicts will be integral to a strong prevention system.



## Policy achievements by 2030

- **Innovative partnerships are established between and within sectors that influence health**, to ensure shared decision-making and to drive evidence-based change.
- **Partnerships with the community are strengthened** and informed by a national consumer engagement strategy that prioritises co-design approaches.
- Communities are supported to

collaboratively deliver **place-based, evidence-informed preventive health action** that is response to local circumstances.


- Public health policies, strategies, and multi-sectoral action for prevention are **protected from real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest** through a national evidence-based approach and transparent stakeholder engagement processes.

## 4. Information and health literacy

All Australians should have access to high quality, evidence-based information about how to manage their health and wellbeing through appropriate preventive action across each stage of their life. However, there are a number of systemic barriers to the provision of information, including access to credible and reliable sources of information, as well as socioeconomic barriers that can affect the education level and health literacy skills of the audience. There is a strong need to create an effective health literacy environment whereby health information is person-centred, accessible, and culturally appropriate.


 *“Translating and communicating health information to all stakeholders in a collaborative and accessible way is essential to improving health literacy and public health messaging.”*

There are many factors that influence an individual’s health literacy, including age, gender, education, disability, culture and language and whether they are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander<sup>295</sup>. As health literacy has strong interactions with the wider determinants of health, any action aimed at improving health literacy and the provision of health information within the prevention system must be implemented through an equity lens and populations experiencing the greatest inequities must be prioritised<sup>296</sup>.


 *“It is vital that health advice is not only culturally tailored and relevant, but where possible developed with input from the people who would benefit most from it.”*

Communities and consumers must be viewed as partners in improving health literacy skills<sup>297</sup>. The community must be mobilised to participate in the co-design of health information and

education; this will ensure that information not only meets the needs of the target audience but also reflects the community in its approach leading to greater community acceptance and uptake<sup>298</sup>.

 *“Individuals need to be supported with trustworthy and simplified health information...that can be provided from their family general practice or a trustworthy government or organisation internet source.”*

Individuals face a range of challenges in accessing preventive health information. There is an overwhelming amount of health information available to consumers today, especially on the internet<sup>299</sup>. But it is often difficult to know whether this information is credible, trustworthy or useful. There is a strong need to help Australians acquire the practical transferable skills to understand which sources of information to trust, in order to combat disinformation and misinformation.

 *“Information and literacy should focus on both improving the literacy of consumers as well as health care professionals.”*

Just like consumers are partners in improving health literacy, so too are members of the health workforce, including acute and specialist health, primary health care, allied health, community health, and public health practitioners. The health workforce have a key role in supporting consumers to access reliable and credible sources of health information, as well as providing information in an accessible and easy to understand format<sup>300</sup>. The capabilities of workforce in this area must also be developed and maintained through ongoing professional development that recognises the importance of embedding preventive education in high quality, person-centred care<sup>301</sup>.




### Policy achievements by 2030

- Consumers are informed by a **national platform that provides or identifies credible, evidence-based health information**.
- A **national health literacy strategy is developed** and Implemented, and guides health service improvements.
- **Health and health care information is tailored and translated for all Australians** (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability and CALD communities).
- The **health workforce is supported in building the health literacy capacity of themselves, their communities, patients and clients**.
- **Concise, valid and reliable measures are used to improve and monitor national health literacy levels** of Australians.

## 5. Research and evaluation

Effective preventive health interventions for all Australians must be underpinned by evidence and incorporate evaluation to inform our knowledge base and ensure continuous quality improvement. Australia has significant strengths in describing patterns of disease and risk factors, as well as mapping the determinants of health<sup>302, 303</sup>. There is an opportunity to better inform our prevention efforts through a greater focus on intervention research that examines the effectiveness of prevention initiatives and provides insights into the resourcing implications, who preventive initiatives work for and under what conditions<sup>304</sup>. Research to consider how local programs can be scaled up to improve health and wellbeing at the regional and national levels is needed<sup>305, 306</sup>.

 *“Ongoing and careful evaluation provides feedback so that activity can be adjusted over time and remain adaptive to changing circumstances.”*

Across Australia there are many examples of effective and innovative approaches to prevention<sup>307</sup>. This Strategy will encourage prevention programs to include rigorous evaluation in their delivery, to ensure that we take every opportunity to understand what works in the Australian context. Evaluation should be: built into program design; methodologically rigorous, with appropriate scale and design; conducted with a combination of expertise and independence; timely to support and influence decision making; and the evaluation processes should be

transparent and open to scrutiny<sup>308</sup>.

This Strategy will enhance Australia’s capacity to understand what works in prevention, including the outcomes from Australian research and evaluation, maximising the benefits to a wider population and making best use of resources.

 *“Bringing researchers together with policy-makers, practitioners, and consumers and community members can have two-fold benefits – ensuring that the research meets the needs of the system and that the research can be more effectively translated into improvements in policy and practice.”*

Prevention research and evaluation should be underpinned by strong partnerships between multiple stakeholders to generate the most valuable research for informing the health of Australians<sup>309</sup>. The expertise of consumers, communities and health care professionals is critical to effective research and evaluation<sup>310</sup>. Early involvement of researchers in the design of a policy, program or prevention service can contribute to more informative evaluation<sup>311</sup>. Likewise, the early engagement of policy makers in research development will assist in aligning research to meet policy needs, increasing the chances of research findings making an impact on preventive health policy<sup>312</sup>. These stakeholders hold vital insights that are required to shape the direction of research and evaluation by refining questions, co-designing interventions, and choosing data collection methods and outcome measures<sup>313</sup>.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- **A systematic approach to the prioritisation** of preventive health research is established.
- The development, testing and evaluation of **preventive health interventions** in Australia **are enhanced**.
- **Partnerships** with those that are affected, **drive the development, implementation and evaluation of interventions**.
- Partnership research and interventions in **specific population groups**, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rural and remote Australians, and other diverse groups, **are prioritised**.
- **Bidirectional prevention partnerships are established between policy makers and researchers** to enable the development of evidence-informed policy and to ensure research aligns with the strategic direction of governments.
- **Collaborative partnership research models are well established** between researchers, policy makers, health care professionals and consumers to ensure evidence translation and knowledge exchange.
- **National guidelines are developed to ensure high-quality evaluation** is a key part of preventive health policy and program development and implementation.
- **Increased evaluation of local initiatives** across different settings and communities to inform opportunities for scaling up at the national level.
- A widely accessible mechanism to **enhance sharing of information on best practice interventions** is established.

## 6. Monitoring and Surveillance


Monitoring and surveillance of preventive health outcomes is important in enabling a strong prevention system. A robust monitoring and surveillance system that is reliable and provides widely accessible data in a timely manner has the potential to drive improvements in prevention by providing information on the effectiveness of initiatives, as well as where additional effort needs to be focused. However, currently, our monitoring and surveillance systems for prevention are fragmented; this Strategy will strengthen this key enabler to better inform preventive action.

 **“Consistent, large-scale measurement of wellbeing in Australia has been lacking, with significant consequences for the planning, implementation and monitoring of prevention activity.”**

While information and data are collected for a number of preventive health risk factors (such as physical inactivity and tobacco use), there are often inconsistencies between the types of data collected<sup>314, 315</sup>. When the outputs of research are used in the absence of national surveillance methods, the variation in measurement is even greater. This means that we cannot accurately and consistently describe trends over time nor identify where in Australia preventive action is better or worse. For example, Australia currently lacks up-to-date national data sets on dietary intake, with current policy relying on information from irregular surveys<sup>316</sup>. The establishment of national data sets, with regular data collection, should underpin any surveillance and monitoring system. Furthermore, disaggregation of these data sets according to location and target populations is required.

The majority of surveillance indicators in Australia currently rely on self-reporting, such as through the National Health Survey and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. While self-reporting can be

relatively accurate for factors such as smoking status, self reporting of risk factors such as weight status is less accurate. Furthermore, this method of surveillance is costly and difficult to collect.

 **“As prevention needs to address the social determinants or root causes of ill health in order to improve health outcomes, monitoring and surveillance indicators must include measures which relate to action on these determinants as well as disease outcomes.”**

A comprehensive prevention monitoring and surveillance system will include information about wider, systemic factors that underpin health and wellbeing. For example, is accurate health information available in different languages and accessible to all Australians including people with disability? Has access to a nutritious and affordable food supply increased in food insecure communities? These measures not only provide key information about whether prevention initiatives are being implemented successfully, but they can also provide critical information to supplement and validate self-reported indicators.

 **“Monitoring of outcomes should be comprehensive and timely.”**

Importantly, the collection of comparative datasets must be timely to allow a clear understanding of the effectiveness of preventive interventions and to observe trends and patterns in the data. In addition, monitoring activities need to include the systematic collection and analysis of demographic data, to better identify the health needs and priorities of priority populations.

To effectively implement preventive health initiatives that are both impactful and targeted, it is essential to build on existing data collection methods and data sources to create a comprehensive picture of the state of health and wellbeing of Australians.



### Policy achievements by 2030


- **A preventive health governance mechanism supports the monitoring and surveillance of this Strategy.**
- **National data sets**, including the AIHW’s Burden of Disease Study and the National Primary Health Data Asset, are compiled and **published regularly**, and include anthropometric (i.e. height, weight etc.), biomedical and environmental measures.
- **A set of nationally agreed prevention monitoring indicators**, including definitions and measures of the wider determinants of health, are established and monitored.
- **A national prevention monitoring and reporting framework** is utilised by all levels of government.

## 7. Preparedness

The emergence of COVID-19 and the extreme bushfire season of 2019-20 in Australia has highlighted the importance of being prepared for future events that may impact our health. Having an adaptable and resilient health system will ensure that processes and systems can continue to pivot in the face of new threats<sup>317</sup>.

 ***“Climate change is likely to be the biggest challenge to health, wellbeing and economic prosperity.”***

Human health is dependent on planetary health. Environmental issues, such as extreme weather events and significant changes in climate systems, have had, and will continue to have, an impact on the health and wellbeing of all Australians<sup>318</sup>. This is particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who have close cultural, spiritual and social connections to the land. In order to prepare for future challenges and address the health of the planet, the impacts of climate change on physical and mental health need to be understood, especially through a health equity lens<sup>319, 320</sup>.

 ***“It is critical we can learn from [COVID-19] and put in place strategies that will enable the preventive health system to adapt to, and more effectively deal with, similar challenges in the future.”***


All of the achievements outlined in this Strategy will help build our preparedness for future health threats: a strong prevention research sector, high quality monitoring and surveillance, an effective and mobilised workforce, and strategies that address the system-level causes of poor health. All of these factors, and more, will create a stronger Australia for the future. The capability to identify early research or other evidence that indicates emerging issues should lie at the heart of an approach to prevention preparedness<sup>321</sup>. Understanding key risks, effective planning and the ability to rapidly respond lie at the heart of effective prevention preparedness.

 ***“Preparedness depends on building workforce capacity that is essential.”***

Investment in workforce and infrastructure that can promptly respond to emerging issues is central to preparedness<sup>322</sup>. For the COVID-19

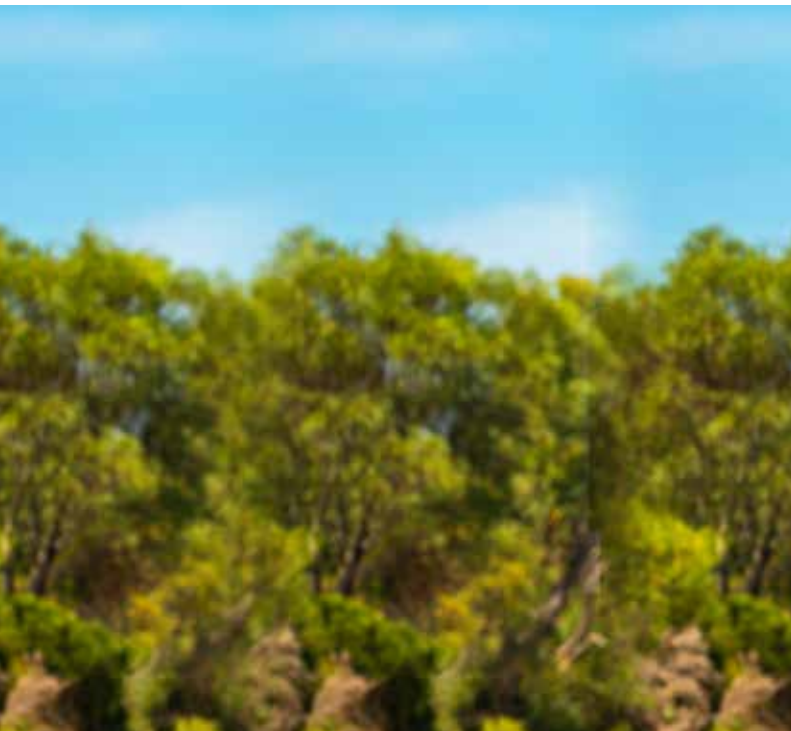


pandemic, areas with a well-developed public health workforce and strong infrastructure were better able to mobilise a rapid and effective response to contact tracing and preventing the spread of the virus. This included the ACCHS sector, whose work to protect remote communities and ensure accessible health information averted the risk of high rates of community transmission. Furthermore, Australia's investment in centres of research expertise such as the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance enabled existing capacity to provide data to inform public policy in a rapid manner<sup>323</sup>. This kind of investment in research which explores health threats such as emerging disease surveillance and climate change impacts, enable a 'readiness' that cannot be generated through one-off short-term funding.

 ***“The partnerships between local government, health and community services have been instrumental in addressing the urgent needs for Victorian communities [during the COVID-19 pandemic]... it is the quality and depth of relationships built on trust that support the success of rapidly mobilised interventions.”***


The capacity to bring together leaders across all levels of government, non-government organisations, health professionals, communities and academia and across different fields is central to an effective response to





unexpected and emerging challenges<sup>324</sup>. The effectiveness of these partnerships has been illustrated in Australia's response to COVID-19, which brought together all Australian governments through a National Cabinet and ensured that health expertise was combined with that of police, treasury, education and other areas where action was critically needed. Co-ordination between these entities also requires understanding roles, where each entity can make a contribution,

what resources can be leveraged, shared data and evidence on which to base decisions, collegiate support for each other in the implementation of planning and response, and utilising previous experience of working together across sectors<sup>325</sup>.

 *“The COVID pandemic... has shone a light on the circumstances which create unequal vulnerability to illness.”*

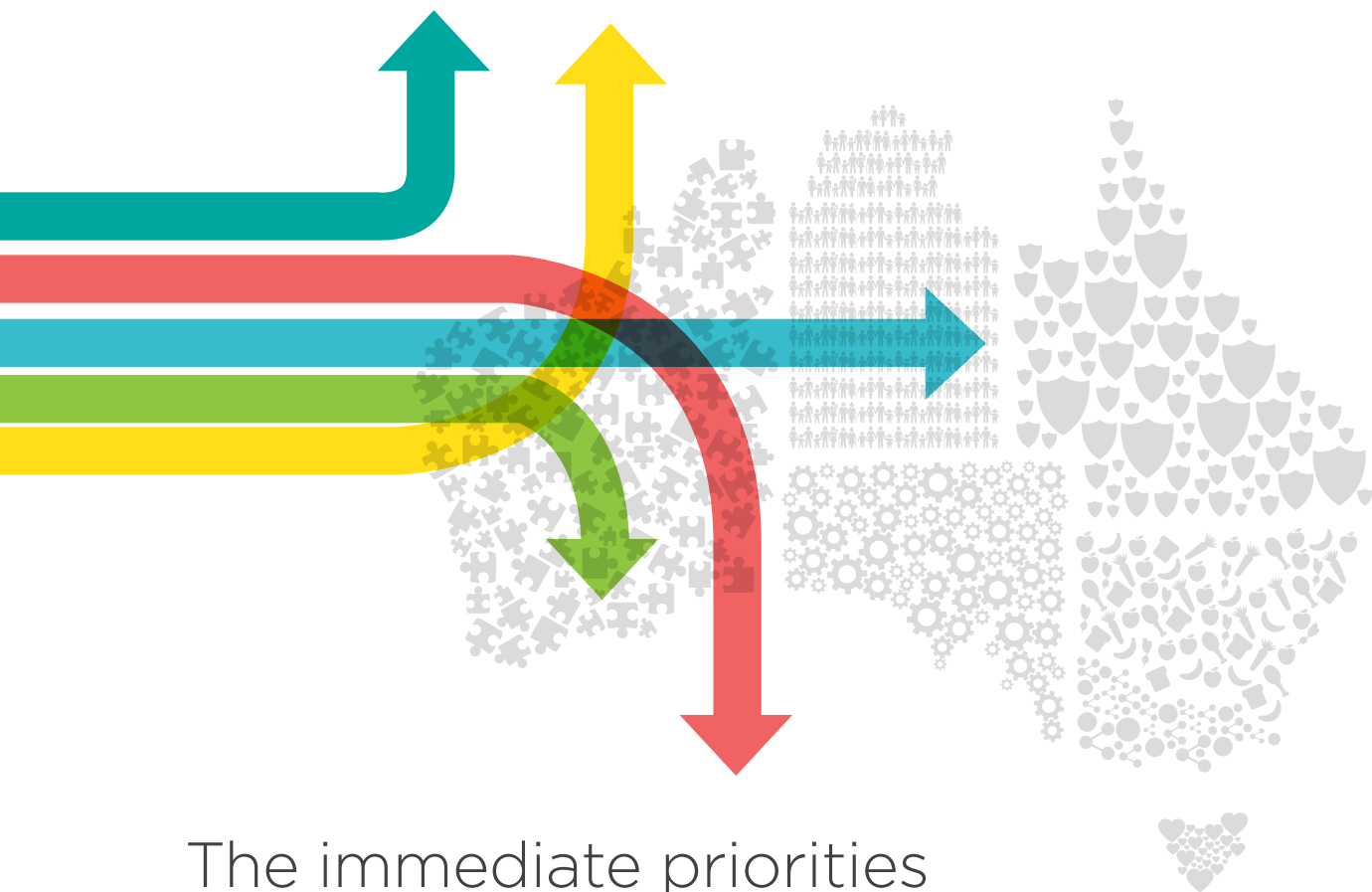
There are already some emerging threats where Australia may wish to increase its preparedness, including the consequences of climate change, rise of antimicrobial resistance and the likelihood of further communicable disease pandemics<sup>326</sup>. The experience of COVID-19 as well as the 2019-20 bushfire season have demonstrated clearly that those who are most vulnerable in society are those who feel the impact of a population-wide public health emergency the greatest<sup>327</sup>. The availability of tailored, culturally appropriate and accessible communication has proven vital to ensure the safety, and health and wellbeing of priority populations in Australia<sup>328</sup>.

The ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019-20 bushfire season have further highlighted the interconnected nature of our health, the wellbeing of a community is only as strong as its individuals. Consequently, when enhancing preparedness and preventive health efforts, a health equity lens must be applied.



#### Policy achievements by 2030

- A national strategic plan addressing the impacts of environmental health, including horizon scanning to identify and understand future threats, is developed and implemented in alignment with this Strategy and the work of the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth).
- Evidence-based approaches to identify and address current and emerging pressures on the most vulnerable parts of the health system caused by climate change, are developed and implemented.
- Stronger infrastructure to support the rapid drawing together of leaders from different fields and from different jurisdictions – to develop national and local responses.
- Public health workforce is 'future proofed' through the enhancement of availability, distribution and the capacity and skills of the workforce.
- The provision of tailored, culturally appropriate and accessible information for all Australians is prioritised during an emergency response to ensure effective messaging and distribution of public health advice.
- A national framework is implemented in all states and territories to distribute close to real-time, nationally consistent air quality information, including consistent categorisation and public health advice<sup>329</sup>. In addition, a 24-hr hour average nationally consistent framework is implemented to provide further public health advice for periods of prolonged air pollution.



## The immediate priorities

In order to realise the achievements over the next 10 years, building key infrastructure and establishing policy direction to mobilise the prevention system needs to be the immediate priority of this Strategy. It is through prioritising the enablers and desired achievements outlined below, that the foundation will be laid for further action in the prevention system.

1. Governance mechanisms
2. Increased investment in prevention
3. A national platform providing credible and reliable health information
4. Embedding prevention in primary health care and aligning with the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan
5. National consumer engagement strategy
6. National health literacy strategy
7. Enhanced public health workforce planning
8. Ongoing national data sets to support the monitoring and evaluation of this Strategy and a National Prevention Monitoring and Reporting Framework

It is time to be bold. Taking a systems-based approach to this Strategy will ensure that it remains relevant with increased prevention funding providing children with the best start to life, improving health inequities, and ultimately, helping Australians to live well for longer.



**1** Reducing tobacco use



**2** Improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet



**3** Increasing physical activity



**4** Increasing cancer screening and prevention



**5** Improving immunisation coverage



**6** Reducing alcohol and other drug harm



**7** Protecting mental health

# Boosting action in focus areas

## Prioritising our efforts

There are many areas that require action to reduce the risks of poor health and disease to help Australians live longer and healthier lives. The top three risk factors that caused the most burden of disease in 2015 were tobacco use, overweight and obesity, and dietary risks<sup>330</sup>.

This Strategy identifies seven focus areas where a stronger and better-coordinated effort will enable accelerated gains in health, particularly for communities experiencing an unfair burden of disease. These focus areas have been identified to boost prevention action in the first years of this Strategy and to impact health outcomes across all stages of life:

- 1. Reducing tobacco use**
- 2. Improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet**
- 3. Increasing physical activity**
- 4. Increasing cancer screening and prevention**
- 5. Improving immunisation coverage**
- 6. Reducing alcohol and other drug harm**
- 7. Protecting mental health**

Accelerated action in each of the focus areas, but especially tobacco, nutrition and physical activity, will significantly decrease the overall burden of disease in Australia. Furthermore, there is an economic benefit to including these focus areas in this Strategy, with research demonstrating that \$6 billion in health costs could be saved by taking action on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods alone<sup>331</sup>.

The need for action in these areas has been exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic which has further demonstrated the severity of living with chronic conditions and/or other vulnerabilities such as obesity, with these individuals at much higher risk of poorer health outcomes and mortality during the pandemic.

Many of these focus areas already have national strategies and plans to guide action; this Strategy will enable, prioritise and build on these efforts. While these focus areas will be the initial priorities for implementation, over the duration of this Strategy, additional focus areas will be identified and addressed as the health needs of Australians evolve over time.

To guide implementation of this Strategy, each focus area will have one or more target/s to measure progress and to evaluate the long-term health and wellbeing of Australians. The targets have been designed to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.



### Targets

- Achieve a national daily smoking prevalence of less than 10% by 2025 and 5% or less for adults (≥18 years) by 2030
- Reduce the smoking rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (≥18 years) to 40% by 2023



## 1.Reducing tobacco use

Australia remains committed to improving the health of all Australians by reducing tobacco use and its associated health, social, environmental and economic costs, and the inequalities it causes. The comprehensive range of tobacco control measures progressively implemented by all Australian governments has been instrumental in ensuring the long-term decline in smoking prevalence, which has seen the proportion of adults who are daily smokers decrease from 23.8% in 1995 to 13.8% in 2017-18<sup>332</sup>. To date, the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have implemented a range of tobacco control measures, including but not limited to increased tobacco excise and excise-equivalent customs duty, plain packaging of tobacco products, and restrictions on the advertising and promotion of tobacco products. In 2015, tobacco use contributed to approximately 21,000 deaths in Australia (13% of all deaths) and 9.3% of the total burden of

disease, almost three-quarters of which was fatal<sup>333</sup>. Tobacco is also the leading cause of cancer in Australia, contributing to 22% of cancer burden, as well as contributing to 41% of respiratory diseases and 12% of cardiovascular diseases<sup>334</sup>. Premature mortality is significantly increased in current smokers, with long term smokers dying an average of 10 years earlier than non-smokers<sup>335</sup>.

Ending the tobacco epidemic is a priority for all Australian governments and has a high level of continued public support for policy measures to reduce tobacco-related harm. Significantly reducing and eventually eliminating tobacco use in Australia would dramatically reduce illness, increase quality of life, and reduce health, social and economic inequalities for smokers, their families and the wider Australian community. It would prevent hundreds of thousands of premature deaths, reduce the burden of costly tobacco-attributable disease,



### Key facts

- Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of preventable burden in Australia<sup>351</sup>
- Tobacco smoking in Australia is estimated to have killed 1,280,000 Australians between 1960 and 2020<sup>352</sup>
- In 2015 alone, tobacco use was estimated to contribute to almost 21,000 deaths<sup>353</sup>
- Up to two-thirds of deaths in tobacco smokers are attributed to smoking<sup>354</sup>
- Long-term smokers die an average of 10 years earlier than non-smokers<sup>355, 356</sup>
- In 2015, people living in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic areas experienced 2.6 times the rate of tobacco attributable death and disease compared to those living in the highest socioeconomic areas
- Tobacco contributes to 41% of respiratory diseases, 22% of cancer burden and 12% of cardiovascular diseases<sup>357</sup>
- In 2017-18, 13.8% of adults are daily smokers<sup>358</sup>
- Smoking is responsible for 23% of the gap in health burden between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians<sup>359</sup>
- Smoking causes over one-third of all deaths in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and half of deaths in older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults<sup>360</sup>
- There are higher rates of daily smoking for people living in outer regional areas (19.0%) and inner regional (15.4%), compared to those living in major cities (12.7%)<sup>361</sup>
- Compared to the general population, smoking rates are approximately double for lesbian and bisexual women, gay men, transgender people, and people with HIV<sup>362, 363</sup>
- In 2015-16, the costs of tobacco use borne by the Australian community were estimated to be \$137 billion<sup>364</sup>

### Long-term benefits of stopping tobacco use<sup>365</sup> :

- In 1 year, the risk of heart disease is halved
- In 5 years, the risk of a stroke is almost the same as that of a person who has never smoked
- In 10 years, the risk of lung cancer is less than half that of a continuing smoker

### Related Strategic Guidance

- National Tobacco Strategy 2012-2018
- National Tobacco Strategy 2020-2030 (in development)
- National Drug Strategy 2017-2026
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap

increase workers' economic productivity and reduce the burden on carers.

There are many psychological, social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to an increased likelihood of using tobacco and a greater difficulty in quitting<sup>336</sup>. Despite large reductions in tobacco smoking over time, there are substantial differences in the smoking rates of populations experiencing disadvantage compared with the broader community. In 2017-18, rates of smoking were higher in areas of most disadvantage with over one fifth (21.7%) of adults living in areas of most disadvantage being current daily smokers, compared with 6.8% in the least disadvantaged areas<sup>337</sup>. Adults reporting mental and behavioural conditions were 1.6 times as likely to be daily smokers compared to the overall population<sup>338</sup>. Smoking prevalence also remains disproportionately high among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



in comparison with the general population (particularly in remote areas), and remains one of the main factors influencing the lower life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In 2018-19, 43.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 18 years and over were current smokers, compared with 15.0% of non-Indigenous Australians<sup>339</sup>. Reducing smoking rates will require action to address the underlying factors that contribute to higher tobacco use and increasing access to support services and community-based tailored programs, particularly within organisations that are already accessed by these groups<sup>340</sup>.

Exposure to second-hand smoke is also a cause of preventable death and disability. It can cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer in non-smoking adults, sudden unexpected death in infancy, and induces and exacerbates a range of mild to severe respiratory effects in people of all ages<sup>341</sup>. Additionally, there is increasing evidence that second-hand smoke exposure is associated with psychological distress<sup>342</sup>. Furthermore, exposure to nicotine through second-hand smoke has shown to increase the chance of nicotine addiction<sup>343</sup>. No level of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke is considered safe<sup>344</sup>, and decreasing tobacco consumption in individuals also has a positive health effect on the people and communities

around them by decreasing exposure to second hand smoke.

Tobacco smoking during pregnancy is the most common preventable risk factor for pregnancy complications, and is associated with poorer perinatal outcomes including low birthweight, being small for gestational age, pre-term birth and perinatal death<sup>345</sup>. In 2018, 9.6% (28,219) of all mothers who gave birth smoked at some time during their pregnancy<sup>346</sup>. Eliminating smoking during pregnancy will give newborns the best chance to have a healthy start to their lives. This is also pivotal to achieving Target 2 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent<sup>347</sup>.

Evidence shows that health begins to improve as soon as smoking stops<sup>348</sup>. Over time, the risk of life-threatening health problems, including lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, drops dramatically<sup>349</sup>. Any attempt to stop smoking should be supported, and evidence-based smoking cessation measures should be readily available to support smokers who want to quit. For the best possible health outcomes for Australians, it is vital to build upon and strengthen population-wide approaches that have been successful in reducing the

prevalence of tobacco use over the past four decades. This needs to be accompanied by a strong emphasis on reducing health and social inequalities through more targeted approaches to reduce smoking among populations with a high prevalence of tobacco use. It is clear that although smoking continues to decline in Australia, maintaining this progress and reaching national daily smoking prevalence targets requires ongoing concerted action.

Novel and emerging products (such as e-cigarettes) present an emerging challenge in Australia's work to prevent and reduce tobacco use and nicotine addiction. Between 2016 and 2019, overall use of e-cigarettes in Australia increased among smokers and non-smokers and across most age groups in 2019; 28.7% of smokers aged 14 years and over reported using e-cigarettes at some point in their lives, with 9.7% currently using e-cigarettes<sup>350</sup>. While most state and territory governments have amended their tobacco control laws to include restriction of the advertising, sale and use of e-cigarettes, Australia's tobacco control efforts have largely focussed on preventing and reducing the use of conventional tobacco

products. To date, Australian governments have taken a precautionary approach to e-cigarettes in view of the risks these products pose to tobacco control efforts and population health and individual health. This approach is underpinned by the current state of evidence regarding the direct harms associated with e-cigarette use. Accordingly, there is a need to ensure that sufficient controls are in place to protect the Australian community from the harms associated with the use of novel tobacco products, with all Australian governments agreeing to protect the health of children and young people as a primary focus.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- Ongoing development, implementation and funding of mass media campaigns and other communication tools have been implemented to: motivate people who use tobacco to quit and recent quitters to continue smoking abstinence; discourage uptake of tobacco use; and reshape social norms about the tobacco industry and tobacco use
- Protection of public policy, including tobacco control policies, from tobacco industry interference
- Increased provision and access to evidence-based cessation services and support to help people who use tobacco to quit
- Ongoing reduction of affordability of tobacco products
- Elimination of exceptions to smoke-free workplaces, public places and other settings
- Reduced tobacco use among populations at a higher risk of harm from tobacco use, and populations with a high prevalence of tobacco use
- Elimination of remaining tobacco-related advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- Stronger regulation of the contents and product disclosures pertaining to tobacco products
- The supply, availability and accessibility of tobacco products is reduced through stronger regulation
- Reduced tobacco use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including during pregnancy, through expansion of efforts and community partnerships
- Stronger regulation, monitoring and enforcement for novel and emerging products including e-cigarettes is implemented
- Reduced tobacco use among disadvantaged communities and other vulnerable population groups through expansion of efforts and community partnerships
- Reduced tobacco use among regional and remote Australians through targeted support



## Targets

- Halt the rise and reverse the trend in the prevalence of obesity in adults by 2030
- Reduce overweight and obesity in children aged 5-17 years by 5% by 2030
- Adults and children ( $\geq 9$  years) maintain or increase their fruit consumption to an average 2 serves per day by 2030
- Adults and children ( $\geq 9$  years) increase their vegetable consumption to an average 5 serves per day by 2030
- Reduce the proportion of children and adults' total energy intake from discretionary foods from  $>30\%$  to  $<20\%$  by 2030
- Reduce the average population sodium intake by 30% by 2030
- Increase the proportion of adults and children who are not exceeding the recommended intake of free sugars by 2030
- 50% of babies are exclusively breastfed until around 4 months of age by 2030



## 2.Improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet

A nutritious diet is one of the most influential factors contributing to our overall health and wellbeing. Nutrition plays a pivotal role at each stage of life, from influencing the expression of an unborn baby's genetic makeup during a woman's pre-natal stage to healing wounds and preventing falls in the elderly; the food and drinks that we consume have immediate as well as long-term effects on our health. This is especially true in the first 2000 days of a child's life whereby, if physically and emotionally possible for both mother and baby, breastfeeding is one of the most effective preventive measures available to provide a child with the best start in life<sup>366</sup>.

Many Australians are consuming a diet with a low intake of fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, nuts and seeds, and a high intake of processed meats, salt, red meat and free sugars<sup>367</sup>. Many diseases are caused or exacerbated by a poor diet, with the top five in 2015 including: coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, bowel

cancer and lung cancer<sup>368</sup>. Furthermore, five of the seven leading factors that have been identified as contributing to the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians are related to poor dietary intake: obesity, high blood cholesterol, alcohol consumption, high blood pressure, and low fruit and vegetable intake<sup>369</sup>. There is also a bidirectional relationship between the food we consume and oral health; increased free sugar intake is strongly linked to increased oral disease which in turn affects an individual's ability to consume adequate nutrition<sup>370</sup>.

In 2015, overweight and obesity was the second highest contributing risk factor to the burden of disease and Australia now has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world<sup>371, 372</sup>. The biggest increase in weight is experienced as children transition to early adulthood, further demonstrating the importance of establishing strong nutritional patterns during the first 2000





days to ensure poor health outcomes do not manifest over the life course. By the time individuals reach mid-life, 84% of men and 73% of women are overweight or obese<sup>373, 374</sup>. This can impact an individual's life immensely, affecting not only their physical health, but also their mental health and wellbeing, and their social and economic opportunities. The harmful health ramifications of carrying excess weight have been highlighted even further during the COVID-19 pandemic, with those living with severe obesity being more at risk of severe illness, including hospitalisation, if COVID-19 is contracted<sup>375</sup>.

Many Australians understand the link between consuming a poor diet and the subsequent negative health implications, however behaviour does not necessarily change. This is because individual choice is not the only factor driving why we eat what we eat; the environment and the food systems where we live, work and play influence our dietary patterns strongly. There have been major changes to the global food system and the way that we consume food over the past few decades. Food is more processed, the serving sizes are larger, the kilojoule content is higher, food is travelling greater distances to



### Key facts

- 27,500 people die a preventable death each year from an unhealthy diet<sup>390</sup>
- Australia has the sixth highest rate of obesity among 22 of the OECD countries<sup>391</sup>
- The cost of healthier foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables and wholegrain bread are sometimes more than 30% higher in regional, rural and remote areas than in major cities<sup>392</sup>
- 4% of Australians reported running out of food in the past 12 months and not being able to purchase more<sup>393</sup>
- 95% of adults have inadequate fruit and vegetable intake, and 95% of children have inadequate vegetable intake<sup>394</sup>
- Around one-third of Australians' energy intake is from discretionary foods - this is highest for teenagers at 41%<sup>395</sup>
- For adults aged 51-70, alcoholic drinks account for more than one-fifth (22%) of discretionary food intake<sup>396</sup>
- In 2007-08, 67% of adults were overweight or obese, up from 63.4% in 2014-15<sup>397</sup>
- A quarter of Australian children are experiencing overweight or obesity - this proportion has not changed in a decade<sup>398</sup>
- Obesity contributes to 14% of the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians
- 75% of the salt we consume is hidden in packaged and processed foods
- Australians consume 2-4 times as much sodium as they need
- 40% of eligible processed and packaged food and drinks contain the Health Star Rating on their front-of-pack labelling

### Related strategic guidance

- National Obesity Prevention Strategy (led by Queensland Health)
- Australian Dietary Guidelines
- National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions
- Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond
- National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines
- Infant Feeding Guidelines
- Clinical Practice Care Guidelines: Pregnancy Care 2019 - Chapter 11 Nutrition and physical activity
- Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guide to Healthy Eating
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap

get to consumers, and convenience foods are often priced to be more affordable than healthy alternatives<sup>376, 377, 378, 379, 380</sup>. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, colonisation has significantly altered the traditional diet which is rich in nutrients and low in energy density<sup>381</sup>. These communities often have particular challenges in accessing healthy and affordable food. All Australians, particularly children, are also inundated with extremely effective marketing techniques that are used to promote the sale and desire of unhealthy products<sup>382, 383</sup>.

Just like access to clean water and health care are basic human rights, so too is access to adequate food and nutrition<sup>384</sup>. Five million Australians in the past 12 months have experienced food insecurity<sup>385</sup>. Preliminary reports suggest that the number of food insecure Australians seeking food relief has doubled in 2020, secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>386</sup>. Food insecure households are more likely to develop chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and mental health issues, as the food and drinks they are consuming are generally high in energy, fat and sugar, and provide low nutritional value<sup>387</sup>. Food access (including cost, affordability, availability and location) is one factor that contributes to food

security and consequently, communities affected by disadvantage including those who live in rural and remote locations, people who are of low socioeconomic status, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, are impacted disproportionately<sup>388</sup>.

For these reasons, multiple strategies aimed at the individual, communities, the food system and the food environment will be needed to achieve the targets in this focus area. This is especially true for tackling the obesity epidemic in Australia; action is needed across the spectrum of prevention, from primordial right through to quaternary. This Strategy seeks to increase the consumption of healthy food and drinks, as well as decrease the consumption of discretionary foods that are currently contributing to a large and excessive proportion of Australians' energy intake<sup>389</sup>.

The Australian Government has a number of initiatives currently underway to increase consumption of a healthy diet, including but not limited to the voluntary Health Star Rating system, the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and the Healthy Food Partnership's Reformulation Program. However, more work must be undertaken to protect against the avoidable burden of dietary-related disease and illness, and premature death.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- Nutrition and food action in Australia is guided by a specific national policy document
- Nutrition information and guidance is translated and widely communicated for all health literacy levels
- Decreased structural and environmental barriers to breastfeeding through policy action
- Australian Dietary Guidelines are supported by a communication and social marketing strategy
- Healthy eating is promoted through widespread multi-media education campaigns
- Ongoing access to adequate and affordable healthy food options are available to all Australians, including older Australians
- Consumer choice is guided by the Health Star Rating system which is displayed on all multi-ingredient packaged food products
- Exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing for children is restricted, including through digital media
- Reduced sugar, saturated fat and sodium content of relevant packaged and processed foods through reformulation & serving size reduction
- Relevant guidelines and policies are regularly updated using the latest scientific evidence
- Consumer choice is guided by energy and ingredient labelling on all packaged alcoholic products
- The nutritional & health needs of priority populations are met through co-designed, community-based programs that are culturally appropriate
- Restricted promotion of unhealthy food and drinks at point of sale and at the end-of-aisle in prominent food retail environments, and increased promotion of healthy food options



- Reduce the prevalence of insufficient physical activity amongst children, adolescents and adults by 15% by 2030

### 3. Increasing physical activity

Australia has a strong sporting culture which is intrinsically linked to our identity as a nation. However, this does not translate into our day-to-day lives and we are generally not physically active enough to receive the numerous co-benefits that movement brings to individuals and communities. Engaging in physical movement and achieving adequate sleep are essential components of preventing poor physical health and for establishing and maintaining strong mental health and wellbeing. There are many different types of physical activity – it is not limited to playing competitive sport or going for a run, and you do not need to be an athlete nor be of a certain age to move your body successfully. The WHO defines physical activity as “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure”<sup>399</sup>. This includes activities such as gardening, using the playground, practising yoga, carrying out household chores and walking to school or work<sup>400</sup>. Conversely, activities that involve sitting, lying down or reclining (when not sleeping) and that do not require a lot of energy expenditure, are referred to as ‘sedentary’<sup>401</sup>. In

Australia, the overall rates of physical inactivity have not changed significantly since 2011 and consequently<sup>402</sup>, Australia was poorly ranked 97-out-of-168 countries by the WHO for physical activity levels in 2016<sup>403</sup>. The ramifications of this immense inactivity are experienced across all levels of society in Australia.

Physical inactivity significantly increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, breast and colon cancer, mental health issues, experiencing falls and musculoskeletal conditions<sup>404, 405</sup>. Regular physical activity at all stages of life also plays an integral role in preventing overweight and obesity, and consequently, with no changes to the population’s activity levels<sup>406</sup>, Australia is still battling an obesity epidemic. Another contributing factor to obesity - as distinct from too little movement - is the amount of time we spend sitting each day. On average, Australian adults are sitting for nearly nine hours per day, and astonishingly, older adolescents are the second-most sedentary group in the population after older Australians<sup>407</sup>. The impact of digitalisation on physical activity



### Key facts

- In 2008, it was estimated that physical inactivity costs Australia more than \$13 billion each year in health care costs<sup>428</sup>
- In 2017-18, 11.5% of those aged 18-64 and 27% of those aged 65+ were inactive (i.e. did not participate in any activity across the week)<sup>429</sup>
- 55% of adults did not meet the physical activity guidelines in 2017-18<sup>430</sup>
- 77% of adults did not meet the muscle strengthening guidelines in 2017-18<sup>431</sup>
- 69% of children aged 2-17 did not meet the physical activity guidelines in 2011-12<sup>432</sup>
- Children and adolescents are spending approximately 64% of their whole day, and 60% of their school day sitting<sup>433, 434</sup>
- In 2017-18, 63% of people from the lowest socioeconomic areas were insufficiently active, compared with only 48% in the highest socioeconomic areas<sup>435</sup>
- More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 5-17 years met the physical activity guidelines than non-Indigenous Australians<sup>436</sup>
- 14 million Australians participate in sport annually<sup>437</sup>
- Participation in sports at least once a week amongst 14 year old females and twice a week amongst 14 year old males is associated with a high level of physical activity in later life<sup>438</sup>
- On average, more than two-thirds of the office workday is spent being sedentary<sup>439</sup>

### Related Strategic Guidance

- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People
- Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults and Older Australians
- Sport 2030 – National Sport Plan
- National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- Clinical Practice Care Guidelines: Pregnancy Care 2019 – *Chapter 11 Nutrition and physical activity*
- National Obesity Prevention Strategy (led by Queensland Health)

levels in children is not yet clear, but some studies have demonstrated that screen time is associated with a reduction in physical activity<sup>408</sup>. Furthermore, there is some evidence that spending prolonged periods of time in a sitting position leads to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and premature death<sup>409</sup>. These effects are more strongly experienced by individuals who are the least physically active within society (<30mins per day), with research suggesting that double the recommended amount of moderate-to-vigorous exercise per day is required in order to compensate for prolonged sitting<sup>410</sup>. But there is hope for improving health, as scenario modelling has demonstrated that for sedentary, low and moderate activity population groups, future disease burden due to insufficient physical activity could be reduced by 13% through an extra 15 minutes of brisk walking, five days per week<sup>411</sup>. This statistic increases to a 26% reduction in future disease burden if the duration of brisk walking is increased to 30 minutes, five days per week<sup>412</sup>.

The repercussions of Australia's low rates of physical activity are also felt in the workplace and in the school environment. For employers, there are higher rates of absenteeism amongst employees who have low physical activity levels<sup>413</sup>, and for employees, increased sedentary time is associated with decreased productivity and lower job satisfaction<sup>414</sup>. It has been estimated that the cost of absenteeism in Australia is \$7 billion per year<sup>415</sup>, but the cost of physical inactivity is more accurately measured by presenteeism (decreased productivity due to illness/injury), which is estimated to be \$26 billion per year<sup>416</sup>. When it comes to the school environment, active students perform better academically<sup>417, 418</sup>, with the presence of physical activity positively influencing concentration, memory and overall classroom behaviour<sup>419</sup>.

Similar to other focus areas in this Strategy, Australians know they need to be moving more to improve their health, but this knowledge is not translating into action. As a nation, our physical activity rates are severely lacking with only 15% of adults meeting both the physical activity and muscle strengthening guidelines<sup>420</sup>. These statistics are even poorer for younger generations with only 12% of children (aged 5-12 years) and 2% of young people (aged 13-17 years) meeting both the physical activity and sedentary screen-based behaviour guidelines<sup>421</sup>.

Physical activity is affected by individual, social, economic and structural factors. For example, whether someone is physically active will be immensely affected by where someone lives, their level of income, and the access they have to places that promote physical activity (i.e. green spaces, community sport, gyms etc.). In addition, perceptions of a lack of safety in the community, physical literacy levels (i.e. the skills, knowledge and behaviours to lead an active life), not being able to prioritise exercise, and the fear of being judged, can all reduce the likelihood of physical movement. Furthermore, there are often fewer opportunities for girls, women, people with disability, older adults, people of low socioeconomic position, and those living in rural/remote communities to access safe, accessible and affordable spaces to be physically active<sup>422</sup>.

While the Australian physical activity and movement guidelines provide a benchmark for achieving optimal benefits from physical activity, evidence suggests there is no threshold for benefits to accrue, with some of the largest health gains derived when the least active individuals become more active<sup>423</sup>. Encouraging and supporting inactive individuals to increase their physical movement, even by small amounts, would benefit the health of many Australians, especially socially disadvantaged

communities, leading to broader community and economic gains. This is particularly true for people with mental illness. There is compelling evidence that being more physically active is an effective adjunctive treatment for improving symptoms across a broad range of mental health conditions<sup>424</sup>.

Physical inactivity is a complex problem. A whole-of-systems approach to physical activity will be required to better support Australians to embed physical movement into their everyday life<sup>425</sup>. Just like altering environments to make healthy food choices the easy choice, opportunities for physical activity must also be accessible and the environments in which we live, work and play need to support us to be more active more regularly. The benefits of this would be widespread, with substantial health and other co-benefits experienced by different sectors within society<sup>426</sup>. There are positive implications for: economic growth through decreased absenteeism and increased workplace productivity; liveability due to decreased urban traffic congestion and pollution; education with physically active children performing better academically; and the community through increased social cohesion and connectedness and decreased social isolation<sup>427</sup>.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- Physical activity action in Australia is guided by a specific national policy document
- Mass media campaigns that link to actionable behaviour change are used to create healthier social norms and influence physical activity behaviour
- Prioritise urban design, land use and infrastructure to support physical activity by providing Australians with access to natural environments, public open spaces and green areas, and active transport networks
- Physical activity measures are standardised and defined consistently across jurisdictions
- Pre-school, primary and secondary schools are supported to ensure that children and students are physically active
- Investment in preventive health action is prioritised for Australians who are currently least active
- Health care professionals are trained and supported to provide advice and support to patients to promote physical activity and to engage in social prescribing (connecting patients with community services to improve health and wellbeing)
- Increased physical activity and reduced sedentary behaviour is promoted and facilitated in Australian workplaces
- Communities are encouraged and supported to deliver locally designed programs that support physical activity, which are inclusive and promote social connection through physical activity
- More Australians are engaged in sport and active recreation throughout every stage of life
- Behavioural and social marketing approaches are used to modify the travel behaviours of Australians to be more active
- All national guidelines and policies are updated using the latest scientific evidence and incorporate sleep and screen time recommendations for all age groups where appropriate



- Increase participation rates for bowel screening to 53% by 2025
- Increase participation rates for breast screening to 65% by 2025
- Increase participation rates for cervical screening to 64% by 2025
- Eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue in Australia by 2035

## 4. Increasing cancer screening and prevention

Australia is a world leader when it comes to the early detection and prevention of cancer. Despite increasing survival rates, cancer remains one of the leading causes of premature death, accounting for around 30% of deaths<sup>440</sup>. Around one third of cancers in Australia are caused by modifiable risk factors, with around 90% of preventable cancers being attributed to tobacco use, UV radiation, overweight and obesity, poor diet and alcohol consumption<sup>441</sup>.

Australia has established a variety of cancer prevention efforts, with one of the most successful being the Slip Slop Slap Seek Slide campaign. Over the past few decades, this campaign has helped educate Australians on how to be sun smart to reduce UV exposure and prevent skin cancer. Campaigns such as this helped embed prevention into Australian culture and contributed to lower rates of cancer nationally<sup>442, 443</sup>. Complementary efforts, such as promoting skin checks, subsequently increases the early detection and early intervention of cancer leading to better health outcomes for Australians.

For those cancers where traditional preventative measures are ineffective or there are currently no screening programs, a focus on research, early detection and accurate diagnosis, and equitable access to treatment and supportive care, is required.

Cancer screening programs increase the likelihood of detecting abnormalities or cancer in its earlier stages, leading to better outcomes. In 2011, people diagnosed with the earliest stage (Stage I) of colorectal cancer and breast cancer in females, had a 5-year relative survival rate close to 100%. When these cancers were diagnosed at their latest stage (Stage IV), the 5-year relative survival rate dropped to 13% and 32% respectively<sup>444</sup>.

Australia has three world leading population based screening programs for cancers: the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP), BreastScreen Australia (BSA), and the National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP). These programs aim to reduce the number of deaths caused by using evidence based approaches to target specific age and population groups. The NCSP and the NBCSP also aim to reduce the number of new cases of cervical and bowel cancer by identifying and treating their precursors (such as pre-cancerous lesions).

Australians with abnormalities diagnosed through the national cancer screening programs have a 54%-63% lower risk of dying from breast cancer<sup>445</sup> and are 40% less likely to die from bowel cancer compared to Australians diagnosed another way<sup>446</sup>. Australia is on track to be the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer<sup>447</sup> thanks to the combination of the NCSP

and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination.

Despite their success, around 50% of eligible Australians do not regularly participate in the national cancer screening programs. Participation rates have remained stable over recent years; ranging from 42% to 54%<sup>448</sup>. Lower rates are also typically experienced across all three programs for specific population cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, low socioeconomic, CALD, and rural and remote populations<sup>449</sup>. This is particularly significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, where cancer is a leading cause of the burden of disease and the leading cause of death, accounting for 23% of all deaths<sup>450</sup>.

Increasing participation rates will prevent many thousands of deaths from cancer. For example, if participation in the bowel cancer screening program reaches and stays at 60% from 2020, potentially 83,000 Australian lives would be saved by 2040<sup>451</sup>. Advanced approaches can also save lives, with the 2017 switch to the more accurate HPV screening test expected to avert 2,006 cases of invasive cervical cancer and save 587 lives over the period 2018-2035<sup>452</sup>.

Strong community engagement and more innovative, data driven approaches are integral to ensuring all eligible Australians are accessing the available screening programs. A recent pilot for the direct distribution of bowel screening test kits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by Indigenous primary health care centres raised participation rates to 39.8% from 23.3%. The option to allow a 'self-collected' sample to be tested for cervical abnormalities also has significant potential to increase the participation rate in this important program<sup>453</sup>.

Building a greater evidence base through data, evaluation and research is vital to inform interventions focussed on increasing participation in cancer screening. Investment in data on screening behaviour will allow screening programs to be tailored to deliver the most benefit. Emerging data and evidence will continue to be reviewed to assess the need for and feasibility of additional cancer screening programs. For example, the outcome of Cancer Australia's targeted consultations following the release of their Lung Cancer Screening enquiry (2020) will be carefully considered by Government.

The establishment of the National Cancer Screening Register enables more accurate, national data to be collected on the programs. These data can be analysed and considered in the context of behavioural science models



### Key facts

- In 2020, it is estimated there will be around 145,000 new cases of cancer diagnosed and around 48,000 deaths from cancer (excluding Keratinocyte skin cancers)<sup>454</sup> (n.b. this statistic does not include non-melanoma skin cancer)
- In 2020, lung cancer is estimated to be the leading cause of cancer related death, followed by colorectal cancer<sup>455</sup>.
- In 2020, breast cancer is estimated to be the most commonly diagnosed cancer, followed by prostate cancer, and melanoma of the skin<sup>456</sup> (n.b. this statistic does not include non-melanoma skin cancer)
- At least one in three cancer cases can be prevented<sup>457</sup>
- Skin cancer accounts for around 80% of all newly diagnosed cancers<sup>458</sup>
- Each year, more than 13,000 cancer deaths are due to smoking, sun exposure, poor diet, alcohol, inadequate exercise or being overweight<sup>459</sup>
- Compared to the heterosexual population, lesbian and bisexual women and gay men are twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer. This is partly attributed to higher rates of smoking and alcohol consumption and low rates of cancer screening in LGBTQI communities<sup>460</sup>

### BreastScreen Australia (BSA)

- In 2018-2019, more than 1.85 million women aged 50-74 participated in BSA, which equates to an age standardised participation rate of 54%<sup>461</sup>.
- Breast cancer mortality has significantly decreased since BSA began, from 74 deaths per 100,000 women aged 50-74 in 1991 to 40 deaths per 100,000 in 2018<sup>462</sup>.

### National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP)

- In 2015-16, the estimated health system cost for bowel cancer was over \$650 million per year<sup>463</sup>.
- Almost 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be cured if detected early<sup>464</sup>.
- In 2018-19, almost 2.5 million people aged 50-74 who were invited to participate in the NBCSP returned a completed bowel screening test. This is a participation rate of approximately 44%<sup>465</sup>.
- The re-participation rate in 2018-2019 for people who had taken part in their previous invitation round was 81%<sup>466</sup>.
- Since 2000, bowel cancer incidence rates have decreased more than any other cancer<sup>467</sup>.



### National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP)

- In 2015-16, the estimated health system cost for cervical cancer was over \$27 million per year<sup>469</sup>.
- Since being introduced in Dec 2017, over the first two years (2018-2019), more than 3.1 million people aged 25-74 had the new HPV screening test.
- In 2018-2019, the lowest participation rates were in very remote (36.9%) and remote areas (42.4%), compared to major cities (46.9%)
- In 2018-19 participation was lowest for people residing in areas with highest disadvantage at 40.8%, compared to 52.0% in areas of lowest disadvantage.
- More than 70% of cervical cancers diagnosed between 2002 and 2012 in people aged 20-69 occurred in those who had either never screened or were overdue for screening.

### Related Strategic Guidance

- National Plan for increasing participation in Cancer Screening 2020-2025 (under development)
- National Cervical Screening Program Quality Framework
- National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Quality Framework Phase Four 2015-2020
- National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Primary Health Care Engagement Strategy 2016-2020
- BreastScreen Australia National Quality Improvement Plan 2018-2020
- Cancer Australia Report on the Lung Cancer Screening enquiry
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap

to help segment audiences, identify trends and develop targeted strategies to drive participation. In the future, people can receive personalised correspondence, tailored to their circumstances and known influences.

New and more flexible approaches to better leverage or adapt existing resources or screening infrastructure could make screening more accessible to under-screened populations. Supporting expanded opening hours for existing screening facilities and co-locating services would make it easier to get screened. Customising materials and supporting culturally or gender appropriate approaches would also expand reach, including among CALD groups and under-screened populations, including men, who typically screen at lower rates than women.

Primary care healthcare providers, administrative and support staff such as practice managers, must also be engaged and supported to increase their patients' screening rates.

All of these activities need to be supported by a coordinated and planned national approach to ensure investments in interventions at all levels of government are achievable, efficient, effective, and more sustainable. This approach is detailed in the *National Plan for increasing participation in Cancer Screening 2020-2025* and is necessary to increase participation and save lives through early detection or prevention of bowel, breast and cervical cancers. Furthermore, increased awareness and education on the risk factors that lead to preventable cancers and how these factors can be reduced or avoided is integral to improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- An increased focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, low socioeconomic, CALD, and rural and remote populations through targeted, localised and culturally appropriate engagement
- Interventions focussed on increasing participation in cancer screening are developed based on evidence built through research, data, and evaluation
- Health care providers are supported and engaged to further encourage and support people
- Engagement strategies are informed by existing and new data to drive behavioural change and increase participation in screening
- The quality and analysis of national cancer screening data has improved, leading to improved services and higher participation rates
- A coordinated national approach has been established that ensures investments in interventions at the national, state, and local level are achievable, efficient, effective, and more sustainable
- Mass media campaigns are used to influence sun protective behaviour
- The evidence base supporting new screening programs is developed further, enabling safe and cost effective approaches to be considered by the Government
- Education and health promotion initiatives are delivered to raise awareness of the modifiable risk factors that lead to preventable cancers





#### Targets

- Increase immunisation coverage rates to 95% of children aged 1, 2 and 5 years by 2030
- Increase immunisation coverage rates to 96% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 2 years by 2023, and maintain high rates of immunisation for children aged 1 and 5 years
- HPV immunisation rate increased to 85% for both boys and girls by 2025

## 5.Improving immunisation coverage

Vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs), such as rubella, tetanus, whooping cough and influenza, can have a severe impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community. Vaccines work by activating the body's immune system to protect against future infection, leading to an individual becoming immune to that disease. Immunisation is one of the most significant public health interventions of the past 200 years, and the WHO estimates that immunisation prevents 2–3 million deaths worldwide each year<sup>470</sup>. One of the key initiatives established to date by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments is the National Immunisation Program (NIP), which provides free vaccines to eligible people including young children, older Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and others who are at greater risk of serious harm from VPDs. The National Immunisation Program vaccinates across the life span including children, adolescents, older Australians and Australians with specific medical risks.

The AIHW reported that in 2015, the equivalent of 15,781 years of healthy life were

lost due to VPDs<sup>471</sup>. 83% of this burden was due to influenza, pneumococcal disease and HPV, and this burden was 4.1 times higher among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people<sup>472</sup>. People aged 25–29 had the highest burden (12%) due to the potential long-term outcome of developing cervical cancer after infection with HPV, followed by people aged 85 and over (11%)<sup>473</sup>. For immunisation to have the greatest benefit, a large proportion of the community must be fully immunised. High immunisation rates protect vulnerable groups in the community, such as those who are too young or too sick to be vaccinated, highlighting the importance of access regardless of financial or geographical barriers. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of immunisation against infectious diseases, and how preventing the spread of disease is integral to community safety. Australia is aiming to obtain early access to a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine that can be provided to all Australians.

Immunisation against VPDs is an important prevention measure, particularly in the early years. Australia has a strong record in



### Key facts

- In 2015-16, vaccine-preventable conditions cost the hospital sector \$616.7 million<sup>486</sup>
- In 2015, 15,781 years of healthy life were lost due to VPDs. The majority of VPDs burden was due to Influenza, Pneumococcal disease and HPV<sup>487</sup>
- In 2016, there were 579 recorded deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases in Australia<sup>488</sup>
- In 2015, 80% of the disease burden from VPDs was due to premature death<sup>489</sup>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 10% of the disease burden due to VPDs<sup>490</sup>
- Funding for vaccine purchasing and services to support immunisation uptake has increased from \$10 million per year in the mid-1970s to more than \$460 million in 2017-18<sup>491</sup>
- The 2009 Adult Vaccination Survey estimated that, for the population aged 65 years and older, 74.6% were vaccinated against seasonal influenza and 54.4% against pneumococcal disease. However, even though this age group is the target population for these vaccines, 22.1% were not vaccinated for either disease<sup>492</sup>
- In 2009, only 11.3% of Australians aged 18 years and over had received a pertussis vaccination as an adult or adolescent<sup>493</sup>
- Since the HPV vaccine was introduced in Australia in 2007, the number of women under 20 years of age with high-grade cervical abnormalities has fallen from 11.6 per 1000 women screened that year to 3.9 per 1000 women screened in 2016<sup>494</sup>
- In Australia, vaccines must pass strict safety testing before the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) will register them for use<sup>495</sup>

### Childhood Immunisation

- 94.7% of all one year olds, 92.4% of all two year olds and 94.9% of all five year olds were fully vaccinated in September 2020<sup>496</sup>
- Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 93.5% of all one year olds, 91.2% of all two year olds and 97% of all five year olds were fully vaccinated in September 2020<sup>497</sup>
- Up to 2% of Australian parents do not immunise their children because they oppose or have concerns about vaccines<sup>498</sup>

childhood immunisation coverage including amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with at least 90% of children at aged 1, 2 and 5 years fully vaccinated in 2020<sup>475, 476</sup>. However, a high national coverage rate can mask geographic areas and population groups who have low coverage. It will continue to be important to maintain and improve these rates over the next 10 years. Consistent with the WHO target for the Western Pacific Region, Australian governments have committed to a target of 95% immunisation coverage for children aged 1, 2 and 5 years through the National Immunisation Strategy 2019-2024<sup>477</sup>. This target provides sufficient herd immunity to prevent transmission of highly infectious VPDs and supports Australia's contribution to achieving measles elimination in the Western Pacific Region<sup>478</sup>.

While childhood immunisation rates are high across Australia, immunisation coverage is important at all stages of life. One of the key challenges in improving immunisation coverage is to target immunisation to population groups who are at increased risk from VPDs, including pregnant women and specific age cohorts<sup>479</sup>. In some cases, people working in areas with a high risk of transmission, such as health care, aged care or child care, are also at higher risk<sup>480</sup>. Vaccination uptake among adults in Australia is not optimal. In 2009, only 53.4% of at-risk adults were vaccinated against influenza and 30% of eligible older adults were vaccinated against shingles<sup>481</sup>. Moving forward, immunisation will need to evolve from a focus on infants and children to vaccinating along the life course – including the need for improved data amongst these cohorts. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) is a complete and reliable national dataset. The reporting of vaccinations to the AIR is key to the health of all Australians as it ensures their AIR records are kept up to date and are accurate. It also enables the monitoring of immunisation coverage to better inform vaccine projections, purchasing, delivery and program performance, and analyses of vaccine effectiveness and safety.

The success of the NIP has meant that many diseases – such as rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and measles – are now rare in Australia<sup>482</sup>. With the lack of visibility of these diseases in the community, complacency can occur among some individuals and healthcare providers.

There is a growing trend of parents who hesitate to have their children vaccinated or delay vaccination. Research suggests that as many as 2% of Australian parents do not immunise their children because they oppose or have concerns about vaccines<sup>483</sup>. This hesitancy can put children at risk of contracting VPDs, and puts the success of the NIP at risk.

Australia's NIP has produced significant gains over the last 20 years. The ongoing success of the NIP depends on a high level of community confidence in immunisation among both individuals and health professionals. To improve immunisation coverage, it is vital that community confidence in the NIP is maintained and boosted through effective communication strategies. While technological platforms such as social media are a potential means for distributing information and educating consumers, particularly populations that are otherwise hard to reach, the WHO reports that these technological trends are also contributing to increased vaccine hesitancy<sup>484</sup>. As outlined in the WHO Global Vaccine Action Plan, it is critical that individuals and communities understand the value of vaccines and demand immunisation as both their right and responsibility<sup>485</sup>. Boosting community confidence in immunisation will be critical in increasing immunisation coverage and lowering the impact of VPDs on the health and wellbeing of Australians.



#### Related Strategic Guidance

- National Immunisation Strategy for Australia 2019 to 2024
- National Immunisation Program Schedule
- Australian Immunisation Handbook
- National Framework for Communicable Disease Control
- Australia's COVID-19 Vaccine and Treatment Strategy
- National Partnership on Essential Vaccines
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap



#### Policy achievements by 2030

- Individuals and communities' understanding of the value of vaccines is increased
- Community confidence in the National Immunisation Program has been maintained and boosted through effective communication strategies
- HPV immunisation coverage rates continue to increase through higher participation in the Gardasil vaccination program
- Enhanced immunisation data are available through increased reporting of vaccinations to the Australian Immunisation Register for all Australians
- Improved monitoring and uptake of influenza, pneumococcal and herpes zoster vaccination
- Access to immunisation services is available for all Australians, regardless of financial or geographical barriers, including increasing/utilising eligible providers who can administer NIP vaccines, thereby increasing access and uptake.
- Immunisation coverage of vulnerable populations and difficult to reach groups has improved through strategic targeting and engagement
- Increased community and health professional awareness of vaccine safety systems, which has led to improved confidence in the program and reporting of adverse events
- Immunisation continues to evolve from a focus on infants and children to vaccinating along the life course
- A safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19 is available to and provided to all Australians

## 6.Reducing alcohol and other drug harm



### Key Facts<sup>523</sup>

#### Alcohol

- In 2015, alcohol was the sixth highest risk factor contributing to the burden of disease in Australia (4.5% of total burden)
- Over 4000 deaths per year have been associated with alcohol use<sup>524</sup>
- In 2017-18, over 2 in 5 adults 18+ years consumed more than 4 standard drinks on one occasion, at least monthly, exceeding single occasion risk guidelines
- In 2019, people living in remote and very remote areas were about 1.5 times as likely than those in major cities to exceed lifetime and single occasion risk guidelines (at least monthly)
- People aged 70 and over are the most likely to drink alcohol daily and the 50-59 age group are most likely to exceed the lifetime risk guideline
- A higher proportion of people with a mental health condition reported drinking at risky levels (for both lifetime and single occasion risk) compared with people who had not been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition
- In 2019, homosexual and bisexual people were more likely to exceed lifetime (25% vs 16.9%) and single occasion risky drinking guidelines (35% vs 26%) compared to heterosexual people<sup>525</sup>



#### Targets

- 10% reduction in harmful alcohol consumption by Australians (≥14 years) by 2025
- 15% decrease in the prevalence of recent illicit drug use (≥14 years) by 2030

Australian governments address alcohol and other drug (AOD) use in the community through a long standing commitment to a harm minimisation framework. This internationally recognised approach, prevents and reduces the harms associated with AOD use through three pillars: harm reduction, demand reduction and supply reduction<sup>499</sup>. This balanced framework guides both health and law enforcement AOD policy and has been shown, over decades, to be an effective approach.

Despite increased investment and some gains, AOD-related harms still impact (directly and/or indirectly) all Australian communities, families and individuals. It is not just individuals who are affected: AOD use can adversely affect families, friends and bystanders. Populations experiencing disadvantage in Australia are at greater risk of harm from AOD-related harm. These harms span health, social and economic domains and range from injury, chronic conditions, mental health problems, road trauma, violence, engagement with criminal justice, trauma and child protection

issues<sup>500</sup>. Economically, AOD use can decrease productivity, increase healthcare and law enforcement costs and reinforce marginalisation and disadvantage<sup>501</sup>.

The consumption of AODs is a major cause of preventable disease and illness in Australia. Together, alcohol use and illicit drug use in Australia contribute to nearly 5% of all deaths<sup>502</sup>. Alcohol use contributes 4.5% of the overall disease burden and injury, through a range of disorders including eight types of cancer, alcohol use disorders, chronic liver disease and injury<sup>503</sup>.

There are a number of public health gains that have been made in Australia regarding alcohol consumption. Between 2009 and 2018, Australia's overall consumption of alcohol (on a per capita basis) and the percentage of people reporting abstinence from alcohol either declined or remained relatively stable<sup>507</sup>. In addition, there has been a significant improvement demonstrated by teenagers aged 12-17 years abstaining from alcohol or delaying the age of their first drink<sup>508</sup>. However, alcohol still remains an important public health issue that is associated with over 4,000 deaths, accounts for 54% of drug-related hospitalisations, and has a significant impact on violence in Australian communities<sup>509, 510</sup>.

The consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can result in birth defects and behavioural and neurodevelopmental abnormalities known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – which has lifelong impacts on individuals, families, carers and communities<sup>511</sup>. The risks associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy are often underestimated. For women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Alcohol has a complex role in Australian society. For example, some Australians regard drinking as the cultural norm and people may not recognise that they are consuming alcohol in quantities that are damaging to their health<sup>512</sup>. Many are unaware of how consuming alcohol contributes to cancer, cerebrovascular, cardiovascular, liver and digestive disease<sup>513</sup>. The Australian Guidelines to Reduce Risks from Drinking Alcohol states to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day<sup>514</sup>. Results from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey show that risky drinkers (lifetime and single occasion risk) are more likely to believe they can



### Non-medical use of pharmaceuticals

- In 2019, people with mental health conditions were twice as likely as those without mental health conditions to have recently used pharmaceuticals for non-medical reasons.
- In 2019, Australians were more likely to approve of non-medical (non-prescribed) use of pain-killers/opioids (12.4%) and tranquilisers/sleeping pills (9.3%) than other illicit drugs (except cannabis).
- Between 2009 and 2018, the number of deaths where benzodiazepines were present rose by 70%.
- Pain-killers/opioids were the most common pharmaceutical used for non-medical reasons in 2019, followed by tranquilisers/sleeping pills.
- In 2019, people from remote and very remote areas were 1.5 times as likely as those from major cities to have used pharmaceuticals for non-medical reasons (non-prescribed).

### Illicit Drugs

- 43% (9.0 million) of Australians aged 14 and over had illicitly used a drug in their life and 16% (3.4 million) had used one in the last 12 months
- Illicit drug use in the previous 12 months has increased for cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, inhalants, hallucinogens and ketamine, between 2016 and 2019
- Use of any illicit drug increased among people in their 40s (from 12% to 16%) and 50s (from 6.7% to 13%) between 2001 and 2019
- In 2019, 31% of homosexual and bisexual people reported recent illicit drug use compared to 16.1% of heterosexual people<sup>526</sup>

### Related Strategic Guidance

- The National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028
- The National Drug Strategy 2017-2026
- National Ice Action Strategy 2015
- National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Strategic Action Plan 2018-2028
- Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol (end of 2020)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap

consume above the recommended guidelines without affecting or putting their health at risk<sup>515</sup>.

Illicit drug use contributes 2.7% of the total disease burden, through accidental poisoning, self-harm, mental illness and suicide, among others<sup>516</sup>. Opioid use accounted for the largest proportion (36%) of the illicit drug burden, followed by amphetamine use, cocaine and cannabis<sup>517</sup>. The non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs is an ongoing public health challenge in Australia, with evidence suggesting an increase in associated harms including mortality<sup>518</sup>.

As with many health issues, social and structural determinants significantly contribute to harmful AOD use and can include complex issues such as social and economic exclusion, poverty, marginalisation, racism and stigmatisation<sup>519, 520</sup>. Many Australians whilst growing up have unfortunately experienced one or many risk factors that can lead to problematic AOD use, including genetic influences, social disadvantage, ease of access, family breakdown, childhood neglect and poor adolescent adjustment<sup>521</sup>. Although no single risk factor can be pinpointed as the cause of future issues, the more risk factors that persist, the greater the cumulative impact. It is the building of protective factors and the development of resilience throughout the lifespan that can counter these risk factors.

Much of Australia's preventive efforts, when it comes to AOD use, rightly focusses on preventing uptake and/or delaying first use, and preventing or reducing harm from use. This approach is underpinned by clear evidence that early onset puts an individual at high risk for problems now and in the future<sup>522</sup>. A greater focus on prevention and action across the life-span is needed. When it comes to addressing AOD use, the focus should be on a harm minimisation response and one that focuses on the social determinants.

There is an opportunity to strengthen Australia's approach to AOD prevention. There is a need for sustainable, coordinated and evidence-based prevention action to shift cultural norms for our younger generations, prevent and delay use, and minimise harms. At the same time, programs that prevent harmful AOD use across the life span should be developed. A significant part of this action must focus on tackling the determinants (individual, social and structural) that lead to AOD-related harm through sustained and whole-of-government action coupled with community engagement and participation. Furthermore, a stronger sense of connectedness to schools and the community are important goals, as well as strategies to enhance wellbeing through a focus on the social and structural influences on risk and protective factors.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- Health and wellbeing is at the forefront of Australia's approach to alcohol and other drug policy and prevention investment
- Leaders across Australia challenge the normalisation of hazardous and harmful alcohol and other drug use
- AOD prevention strategies avoid and combat stigma and discrimination
- Effective strategies include engagement with and involvement of the broader community
- The availability and promotion of alcohol is restricted to minimise alcohol-related harm, particularly young people, including promotion of the NHMRC alcohol guidelines
- Restrict exposure to alcohol marketing for children, including through digital media
- Evidence-based and credible mass media campaigns are a part of broader strategies to prevent harm
- The age of onset of alcohol and other drug use is delayed to reduce harm among young people and across their later years
- The particular needs of vulnerable populations and rural and remote populations are prioritised in AOD prevention action
- Prevention is informed by strategies to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors associated with hazardous and harmful alcohol and other drug use
- The health workforce is better educated on alcohol, tobacco and other drug issues and are confident in identifying, supporting and referring clients to evidence-based support pathways for those experiencing alcohol and drug related harms



- Towards zero suicides for all Australians

## 7. Protecting mental health

Mental health plays an integral role in determining our overall health and wellbeing<sup>527</sup>. It is expected that almost half of the Australian population (45%) aged 16-85 years will experience a mental disorder at some point in their life<sup>528</sup>, and an estimated 2-3% of Australians have severe mental illness (including psychotic disorders and people with severe depression and anxiety)<sup>529</sup>. Additionally, over 3000 Australians per year are lost to suicide<sup>530</sup>. This is a prominent issue for Australians and in 2012, the National Mental Health Commission was established to provide evidence-based policy advice to Government and to disseminate information on ways to continuously improve Australia's mental health and suicide prevention systems. However, there is more work that is required across Australia to support this effort and reduce the burden of disease, and a focus on the protective factors for positive mental health and wellbeing is required.

There is a bidirectional relationship between mental illness and physical health; people with mental illness have an increased risk of physical illness, and vice-versa. Thus, strengthening our mental health not only increases wellbeing, but also protects against other health conditions and reduces exposure to risk factors. People with severe mental illness are three times more likely than the general population to have diabetes and are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease<sup>531</sup>. Additionally, there is a strong association between mental illness and the use of alcohol,

tobacco and illicit drugs, with people with mental health issues being twice as likely to smoke and 1.7 times more likely to have used illicit drugs<sup>533</sup>. Use of these substances not only triggers and/or worsens mental health issues, but substance use is also strongly associated with cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, and cardiovascular disease<sup>534</sup>.

There are many protective factors that contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing. Over the life course, these include positive family functioning, supportive communities, social support and strong social relationships (including online), physical activity, employment, consuming a nutritious diet, reduced alcohol intake, and the access and use of green space<sup>535</sup>. Boosting protective factors can help people cope with the normal stresses of life and increase resilience in the face of adversity, enabling them to work productively and make a contribution to their community<sup>536, 537</sup>. Providing supports that mitigate the effects of social, economic, or environmental stresses also helps to protect mental health from deteriorating<sup>538</sup>. Many of the protective factors are strongly linked to the wider determinants of health and therefore, to better protect and promote mental health and wellbeing, health needs to be considered in all policies across government as recommended in the Mobilising a Prevention System section of this Strategy. There is a particular need to focus on physical health and wellbeing in those who experience severe mental illness<sup>539</sup>. This is an area that has not seen improvement in recent



## Key Facts

- In 2015, mental and substance use disorders contributed to 12% of Australia's burden of disease<sup>552, 553</sup>
- Over 13% of 4-11 year olds in Australia experienced a diagnosable mental health condition in the past 12 months<sup>554</sup>
- Half of all mental disorders start by 14 years.<sup>555</sup>
- 75% of people who develop mental illness first experience mental ill-health before the age of 25 years<sup>556</sup>
- Almost half of all Australian adults have met the diagnostic criteria for a mental illness at some point in their lives, and almost one in five Australians have met the criteria in a given year<sup>557</sup>
- In 2019, 16.9% of the general population aged 14 and over had been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the previous 12 months<sup>558</sup>
- Australia spends over \$9.9 billion each year on mental health-related services<sup>559</sup>
- The cost of mental ill health and suicide to the Australian economy is estimated at between \$43 billion and \$70 billion per year, including the costs of providing treatment and supports and loss of economic participation and productivity<sup>560</sup>
- In 2019, people with mental health conditions were more likely to drink at risky levels than those without mental health conditions (21% compared with 17.1% for lifetime risky drinking, and 31% compared with 25% for single occasion risky drinking at least monthly)<sup>561</sup>
- In 2010, 96% of people with psychosis were classified as either sedentary or undertaking low levels of exercise compared with 72% for the general population<sup>562</sup>
- Compared with the general population, LGBTI people are more likely to have depression, anxiety, be diagnosed with a mental health disorder, have suicide ideation, engaged in self-harm and/or attempted suicide in their lifetime<sup>563</sup>
- In 2003, 10% of the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians was linked to mental health conditions; another 4% of the gap is attributable to suicide<sup>564</sup>
- Generally, immigrants are under-represented in the populations who utilise mental health services in Australia<sup>565</sup>
- Australians living in remote and very remote areas are around twice as likely to die from suicide compared with Australia overall<sup>566</sup>

decades.

Infants and children, more than any other age group, are shaped and influenced by a range of social, biological and environmental factors. Their mental health and wellbeing cannot be separated from the broader context of their lives, which includes their own individual characteristics, their family, school, local neighbourhood, and community environments. Prevention and early intervention are vital elements in improving infant and child emotional and social wellbeing, and helping to prevent the development of mental illness as they journey into adolescence and adulthood<sup>540</sup>.

Adolescence and early adulthood is a critical time in a young person's life, with research highlighting that more than 75% of mental health disorders begin before the age of 25<sup>541</sup>. For people younger than 25 years old, mental health problems, especially anxiety and mood disorders, are the main cause of disability-adjusted life-years, accounting for 45% of the global burden of disease<sup>542</sup>.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted more than ever the importance of social connection and the immense impact that social isolation can have on our mental health and wellbeing. Being involved in a community can improve peoples' feelings of social connectedness and provide a sense of belonging and purpose in everyday life<sup>543</sup>. This sense of value and social connection can prevent and reduce feelings of isolation, anxiety and depression<sup>544</sup>. A positive sense of identity and cultural heritage can also contribute to mental health and wellbeing, particularly for people from CALD backgrounds. When there are uncertainties around cultural identity and individuals don't feel like they 'belong' in a community, feelings of being lost and isolated are often experienced<sup>545</sup>. To combat this, it is imperative that communities are inclusive of people from all cultures, are free from discrimination, and differences in cultures are understood, accommodated and embraced. This is also essential during the provision of healthcare so that people from CALD backgrounds receive culturally appropriate health advice and information.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the separation from country and kin, and subsequent loss of connection to traditional cultural practices due to colonisation, is one of the leading factors of poor mental health and



wellbeing<sup>546, 547</sup>. Additionally, suicide rates are significantly higher in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, accounting for 5.7% of all deaths in 2019 compared with 1.9% in the non-Indigenous population<sup>548</sup>. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approach to health is holistic and connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community all impact mental health and wellbeing<sup>549</sup>. Reconnecting to culture is crucial in helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people heal from the intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation, and to help future generations avoid the same adverse effects. Supporting the holistic, comprehensive and culturally appropriate health care provided by ACCHSs, along with collectively working together to achieve the outcomes and objectives of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to drive place-based solutions according to their own unique priorities and circumstances.

As recommended in the Mental Health Productivity Commission report, handed down in November 2020, the mental health system needs to be refocused towards prevention and early intervention<sup>550</sup>. As those with severe mental illness have a reduced life expectancy

### Related Strategic Guidance

- Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2017–2022
- Productivity Commission Mental Health Inquiry Report 2020
- National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023
- National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan May 2020
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap

compared with the rest of the population, there needs to be a specific focus on how these people access relevant services and are supported to improve their physical health<sup>551</sup>. Boosting action in the other focus areas of this Strategy, including a focus on diet, physical activity, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, will also contribute strongly to improving and protecting the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. This, alongside supporting community cohesion and promoting social connectivity will help protect the mental health and wellbeing of Australians to live full and meaningful lives.



### Policy achievements by 2030

- Australians are kept well through the management of their health and wellbeing in the community
- Community cohesion and social connectivity is boosted and promoted, particularly among those at risk of loneliness and isolation
- The use of mental health services is promoted and normalised to reduce stigma and encourage early intervention
- Investment in prevention and early intervention is prioritised, both early in life and early in the development of an illness, supporting Australians, especially rural and remote communities, to prioritise and manage their own mental health and that of their loved ones
- A national stigma reduction strategy is developed and implemented
- Programs are delivered within schools, workplaces and communities to improve mental health literacy and enhance resilience
- Targeted prevention and early intervention programs are implemented for children and their families through partnerships between mental health, maternal and child health services, schools and other related organisations
- Suicide prevention activities are co-ordinated through a nationally agreed suicide prevention implementation strategy to improve efforts to identify people at risk of suicide and improve the effectiveness of services and support available to them
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are empowered to develop their own solutions to prevent suicide

# Continuing Strong Foundations

## Ensuring sustained action

There are many effective and well-designed prevention-based programs and strategies developed by government, non-government organisations and communities. This element of the Framework acknowledges the immense activity that is already under way to better prevent illness and disease in Australia. This activity is delivered by a number of prevention actors highlighted in **Figure 6**.

Key lessons should be considered in order to continue strong prevention foundations including the need: to harness community mobilisation and action; for sustained participation; for enhanced investment and leadership; for partnerships; to commit to social, political and structural approaches to prevention; and to build and use evidence from multiple sources to continuously adapt and evolve.

It is important to continue and build on current prevention activity by incorporating the lessons learnt over time, to ensure sustained action across the prevention system.

Prevention partners		
Academia	Community and cultural settings	Non-government organisations
ACCHSs	Families	Private health insurers
Across government	Healthcare systems	Professional associations
Built environment	Individuals	Schools
Business sector	Industry	Unions
Childcare		Workplaces
Communities		

Figure 6 - Partners in preventive health action

## The Framework allows for the creation of new Focus Areas to boost responses to emerging health issues.

This Strategy will continue and improve on the current action taking place in the prevention system including through implementation of the prevention measures outlined in the chronic disease national strategic action plans. This action contributes to reducing and preventing the burden of disease across the lifespan of all Australians (Figure 7). In turn, this action will also reduce the burden on the health system. The Framework has been designed to be responsive and adaptable over the 10-year period of this Strategy.

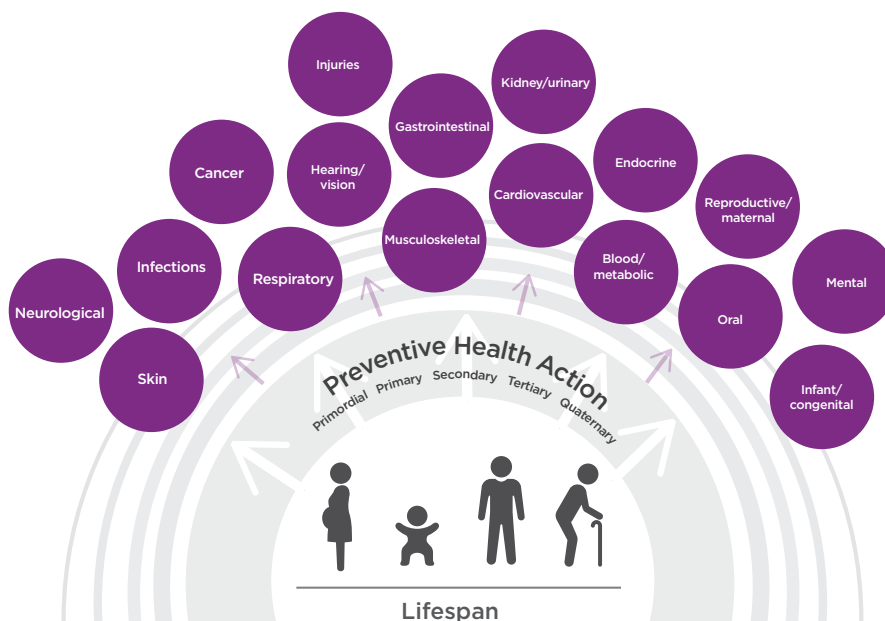


Figure 7 - The AIHW disease groups\* that can be prevented through ongoing, sustained preventive health action across the lifespan  
\*not all diseases listed in the categorised groups in the AIHW Australia's Burden of Disease Study 2015 can be prevented



## Monitoring Australia's success

### Action by all

#### This is a Strategy for all Australians.

The responsibility for creating positive change by 2030 is shared: by all governments, the non-government sector, healthcare sector, research and academia, private sector, industries, communities and individuals. Every Australian and every sector has a role to play in achieving the vision that we are healthy and able to lead fulfilling and productive lives for as long as possible. This Strategy is a collective framework for action.

A “Blueprint for Action” will be developed which outlines the implementation details, including how existing health infrastructure will be leveraged, in reaching the ‘Policy achievements by 2030’ and targets outlined within this Strategy. A key focus of this Strategy is the need to mobilise the prevention system to ensure an enduring system into the future and it is important this commences in the first year of this Strategy. Therefore, parallel to the development of the “Blueprint for Action”,

the implementation of the immediate priorities outlined in this Strategy will commence.

Table 8 outlines all of the targets that will be monitored and reported on. It also provides further detail on the definitions of key terms in the targets as well as strategic links to current Australian Government policy and international commitments that Australia has signed up to as a Member State of the WHO.

The Australian Government will monitor progress towards each of the targets outlined in **Table 8** and will report regularly on Australia's progress.

**Table 8**

Aim/Focus area	Target/s	Baseline figures	Data source and anticipated timeframe
<b>Aim 1: Australians have the best start in life</b>	The proportion of the first 25 years lived in full health will increase by 2% by 2030	In 2015, the total DALY in Australians aged 0-24 years was 532,900	AIHW Burden of Disease Study, approx. every three years
<b>Aim 2: Australians live as long as possible in good health</b>	Australians will have an additional two years of life lived in full health by 2030	In 2015, HALE for males at birth was 71.5 years and 74.4 years for females (compared to life expectancy, this is an average of 89% and 88% of life lived in full health, respectively)	AIHW Burden of Disease Study, approx. every three years
<b>Aim 3: Health equity for target populations</b>	Australians in the two lowest SEIFA quintiles will have an additional three years of life lived in full health by 2030	In 2015, HALE for males in the lowest socioeconomic group at birth was 68.3 years and 71.8 years for females (compared to life expectancy, this is an average of 88% and 87% of life lived in full health, respectively)  In 2015, HALE for males in the second lowest socioeconomic group at birth was 69.8 years and 73.2 years for females (compared to life expectancy, this is an average of 88% of life lived in full health for both)	AIHW Burden of Disease Study, approx. every three years
	Australians in regional and remote areas will have an additional three years of life lived in full health by 2030	In 2015, HALE at birth for males and females in inner regional areas was 2.1 and 1.4 years shorter, respectively, than for those in major cities; and in outer regional areas, was 2.7 and 1.2 years shorter	
	The rate of Indigenous-specific general practitioner health checks increases 10% year-on-year across each age group	In 2019-20: Ages 0-4 years: 27% Ages 5-14 years: 29% Ages 15-24 years: 25% Ages 25-54 years: 31% Ages 55+ years: 45%	AIHW - tracking progress against the Implementation Plan goals for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023
<b>Aim 4: Investment in prevention is increased</b>	Investment in preventive health will rise to be 5% of total health expenditure by 2030	In 2018-19, public health expenditure is 1.5% of total health expenditure	AIHW Health Expenditure Analysis, yearly
<b>Focus Area: Reducing tobacco use</b>	Achieve a national daily smoking prevalence of less than 10% by 2025 and 5% or less for adults (≥18 years) by 2030	In 2017-18, 13.8% of adults (≥18 years) are daily smokers	ABS National Health Survey, approx. every three years
	Reduce the smoking rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults to 40% by 2023	In 2018-19, based on age-standardised rates, 43% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults reported smoking tobacco	ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, approx. every 4-6 years (as smoking rates also recorded in National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey)

Relevant strategy, action plan, guidelines etc.	Aligns with international commitments?	Comments
n/a		Percentage point increase by 2%
n/a		
n/a		
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, approx. quarterly		Indigenous-specific general practitioner health checks are item 715 in the Medicare Benefits Schedule.
n/a		Percentage point increase by 5% Public health is defined by AIHW as “activities that focus on prevention, promotion and protection rather than on treatment, on populations rather than individuals, and on the factors and behaviours that cause illness and injury rather than the injury itself” The estimates do not include funding of public health activities by departments such as education, veterans’ affairs, law enforcement, transport and environment, non-government organisations or households.
National Tobacco Strategy 2020-2030	Yes	
Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023		Percentage point decrease by 3% Smoking rate includes daily, at least once a week, and less than weekly. <b>Please note that this target will be updated in early 2021 to be in line with the refresh of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.</b>

Aim/Focus area	Target/s	Baseline figures	Data source and anticipated timeframe
<b>Focus Area: Improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet</b>	Halt the rise and reverse the trend in prevalence of obesity in adults by 2030	In 2017-18, 31% of adults (18+) were obese	ABS National Health Survey, approx. every three years
	Reduce overweight and obesity in children aged 5-17 years by 5% by 2030	In 2017-18, 24.9% of children aged 5-17 years were overweight or obese	ABS National Health Survey, approx. every three years
	Adults and children (≥9 years) maintain or increase their fruit consumption to an average 2 serves per day by 2030	In 2017-18: Ages 9-11: 2.2 serves Ages 12-13: 1.9 serves Ages 14-17: 1.9 serves Ages 18+: 1.7 serves	ABS National Health Survey, approx. every three years
	Adults and children (≥9 years) increase their vegetable consumption to an average 5 serves per day by 2030	In 2017-18 Ages 9-11: 2.1 serves Ages 12-13: 2.0 serves Ages 14-17: 2.2 serves Ages 18+: 2.4 serves	ABS National Health Survey, approx. every three years
	Reduce the proportion of children and adult's energy intake from discretionary foods from >30% to <20% by 2030	In 2011-12: Across all ages, 35% of total energy consumed was from discretionary foods. This was highest amongst 14-18 year olds (41%)	ABS National Health Survey, varied (not measured in more recent National Health Surveys)
	Reduce the average population sodium intake by 30% by 2030	In 2011-12, average daily intake of sodium from food was just over 2,404mg (includes sodium naturally present in foods & sodium added during processing, but excludes 'discretionary salt' added by consumers)	National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (NNPAS)
	Increase the proportion of adults and children who are not exceeding the recommended intake of free sugars by 2030	In 2011-12, over half of Australians (aged 2+ years) exceeded 10% of dietary energy from free sugars (consumed an average of 60g of free sugars per day)	ABS Australian Health Survey: Consumption of added sugars. Varied (not measured in more recent National Health Surveys)
	50% of babies are exclusively breastfed until around 4 months of age by 2030	In 2017-18, 61% children aged 4-47 months had been exclusively breastfed to at least 4 months of age	AIHW Australia's Children, varies (5-8 years)
<b>Focus Area: Increasing physical activity</b>	Reduce the prevalence of physical inactivity amongst children, adolescents and adults by 15% by 2030	2011-12: 2-5 years: 39% did not meet physical activity guideline 5-12 years: 74% did not meet guidelines 13-17 years: 92% did not meet guidelines  2017-18: 90% of 15-17 years olds did not meet guideline of at least 60mins of physical activity on 7 days in the last week (including work) Proportion of 18-64 not meeting physical activity component of guidelines (including work): 50% Proportion of 65+ not meeting physical activity component of guidelines (including work): 72%	Physical activity across the lifestages report (data from AHS 2011-12)  NHS 2017-18  Insufficient physical activity report (NHS 2017-18)  Approx. every three years

Relevant strategy, action plan, guidelines etc.	Aligns with international commitments?	Comments
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020	Yes	
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020		Percentage point decrease by 5%
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020 Australian Dietary Guidelines		
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020 Australian Dietary Guidelines		
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020 Australian Dietary Guidelines		Discretionary foods are foods considered to be of little nutritional value and which tend to be high in saturated fats, sugars, salt and/or alcohol.
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020 Australian Dietary Guidelines	Yes	30% relative reduction  The NNPAS is anticipated to be completed again in 2023 as part of Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study.
National Obesity Prevention Strategy 2020 Australian Dietary Guidelines	Yes	The World Health Organization (2015) recommends that 'free' sugars make up no more than 10% of daily kilojoule intake to prevent unhealthy weight gain and dental caries.
COAG Health Council Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond		The World Health Organization (WHO) (2003) recommends exclusive breastfeeding to 6 months of age. Reporting exclusive breastfeeding to this age is not a stable indicator as solid foods are often introduced around this time. As such, exclusive breastfeeding to around 4 months of age is commonly reported in Australia.
Australia's 24-Hour Movement Guidelines and Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines	Yes	Relative reduction by 15%  Definition of physical inactivity for the target: An absence or sufficient level of physical activity required to meet the current physical activity component of the national recommendations.  The National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey is anticipated to be completed again in 2023 as part of Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study.

Aim/Focus area	Target/s	Baseline figures	Data source and anticipated timeframe
<b>Focus Area: Increasing cancer prevention and screening</b>	Increase participation rates for bowel (to 53%), breast (to 65%) and cervical cancer (to 64%) screening services by 2025.	2020 reported screening rates (2018-2019 participation): Bowel - 44% Cervical - 46%* Breast - 54% *estimated 2-year participation rate for a 5 year program. See comment box.	AIHW National Cancer Participation data, yearly, for screening interval ending the previous year.
	Eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue in Australia by 2035	In 2016, there were 889 new cases of cervical cancer diagnosed in Australia.	AIHW Cancer In Australia Report, every 1-3 years
<b>Focus Area: Improving immunisation coverage</b>	Increase immunisation coverage rates to 95% of children aged 1, 2 and 5 years by 2030	In September 2020: 94.7% of all one year olds, 92.3% of all two year olds, and 94.9% of all five year olds fully vaccinated	Australian Immunisation Register (published by Department of Health), Quarterly
	Increase immunisation coverage rates to 96% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 2 years by 2023, and maintain high rates of immunisation for children aged 1 and 5 years.	In September 2020: 92.6% of all one year olds, 91.2% of all two year olds, and 96.9% of all five year olds were fully vaccinated	Australian Immunisation Register (published by Department of Health), Quarterly
	HPV immunisation rate increased to 85% for both boys and girls by 2025	80.2% coverage of females turning 15 years of age in 2017 75.9% coverage of males turning 15 years of age in 2017	National HPV Vaccination Program Register (HPV Register)
<b>Focus Area: Reducing alcohol and other drug-related harm</b>	10% reduction in harmful alcohol consumption by 2025	In 2019, 17% of people (aged 14+) exceeded the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol (as per the 2009 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Harm from Alcohol to be reported against the 2020 Guidelines with the next survey collection).	National Drug Strategy Household Survey, every 2-3 years
	15% decrease in the prevalence of recent illicit drug use ( $\geq 14$ years) by 2030	In 2019, 16.4% had used an illicit drug in the past 12 months.	National Drug Household Survey, every 2-3 years
<b>Focus Area: Protecting mental health</b>	Towards zero suicides for all Australians	In 2019, there were 3,318 deaths by suicide with an age-standardised rate of 12.9 per 100,000 population	AIHW Suicide & self-harm monitoring data, annually



Relevant strategy, action plan, guidelines etc.	Aligns with international commitments?	Comments
National Action Plan for Increasing Participation in Cancer Screening 2020-2025 (under development)	Yes	The National Cervical Screening Program underwent a major renewal in late 2017; including a change to screening interval (from 2 to 5 years) and eligible ages. As such, a formal participation rate will not be available until 2023; when a complete 5 year screening interval has passed (2018-2022). This means there is no “baseline” available for the NCSP, and the 20% increase applies only to Bowel and Breast Screening.
National Action Plan for Increasing Participation in Cancer Screening 2020-2025 (under development)		
National Immunisation Strategy for Australia 2019 to 2024		
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan		
National Immunisation Strategy for Australia 2019 to 2024		
National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028  National Drug Strategy 2017-2026	Yes	Relative reduction by 10%  Harmful alcohol consumption is measured against the NHMRC Guidelines to Reduce Harm from Alcohol as consuming more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.  *Note the baseline data may change in line with the updated (2020) Australian Alcohol Guidelines.
		Relative reduction by 15%
The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan		

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