AIHW report confirms unhealthy eating has become the new smoking - Media release

A recent report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has confirmed that unhealthy eating is the new smoking with 'overweight and obesity' the number one risk factor contributing the highest cost to Australia's health system, at $4.3billion versus $3.3billion for smoking.

Of the top 20 most expensive risk factors identified in the report, nine are directly linked to diet, costing Australia $16.2billion.[1]

Chief Executive Officer of Dietitians Australia, Robert Hunt is calling on the federal government to take immediate action against the nation's ailing health.

"One quarter of our children and 67% of Australian adults are overweight or obese[2]," Robert said.

"So, whether directly or indirectly, every single Australian is impacted by the issues from our nation's diet."

Robert explained the systemic issues include rising quantities of energy-dense nutrient-poor foods in Australia that are heavily marketed.

"The federal government has successfully reduced smoking in Australia through the National Tobacco Strategy that implemented plain packaging, health warnings and advertising bans," Robert said.

“Not everyone smokes, but everyone must eat so we can’t afford to keep pushing this issue aside.”

The Morrison government’s 22-23 budget announced $700k toward the development of a National Nutrition Policy Framework that Dietitians Australia hopes will be the first significant step toward elevating the nation’s health.

“A National Nutrition Policy must consider learnings from the Tobacco Strategy to reduce diet-related illnesses while increasing access to affordable nutritious food and encouraging greater activity levels.”

ENDS

Robert Hunt is available for interview

[1] Health system spending attributable to risk factors

Risk factor	Cost (millions)
Overweight (including obesity)	4268
High blood plasma glucose	3187
alcohol use	2108
impaired kidney function	1947
High blood pressure	1693
Dietary risks	1180
Low bone mineral density	1153
High cholesterol	413
Iron deficiency	277

Risk factor	Cost (millions)
	16226

[2]AIHW report

Media enquiries

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Note to editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice of nutrition in Australia, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.