Dietitians Australia

New research grades the Victorian Government at a C+ on preventive health

Victoria needs urgent investment in preventive health measures, according to the latest scorecard of government performance related to obesity.

The Food Policy Index for Victoria released today benchmarked the Victorian Government on its implementation of globally recommended policies to improve population diets.

It comes as a collaboration of allied health and preventive health groups call on the newly elected government to commit to moving towards an investment of 5 per cent of the health budget on preventive health measures.

The report has found the new Victorian government must focus on bolstering the capacity of the Health Department and other agencies to take actions relating to health promotion, and public health nutrition.

Currently, prevention is estimated to make up only 2 per cent of the total government health expenditure in Victoria.

“Unhealthy diets and obesity are leading contributors to poor health outcomes in Victoria,” Associate Professor Gary Sacks from Deakin University’s Institute for Health Transformation (IHT) and Co-Director of IHT’s Global Centre for Preventative Health and Nutrition (GLOBE) said.

“This research shows that the Victorian Government needs to focus much more heavily on prevention in order to avoid enormous costs to individuals, communities, the health-care system and the economy.”

“Health expenditure growth in Victoria has been trending upwards of 4 per cent per year, which is unsustainable,” Victorian President of the Public Health Association, Anna Nicholson said.

“The more disease we prevent, the less we rely on the costly and strained ambulance, emergency and hospital services,” she said.

“Victorians have dealt with monumentally difficult challenges recently, our acute health system is struggling and as a state, we are now grappling with the impacts of recent natural disasters,” Dietitians Australia Board Member, Jemma O’Hanlon said.

“We understand the pressures the new Victorian Government will face, but it is critical for the future health of the state to see a commitment to giving preventive health the piece of the budget pie it deserves,” Dietitians Australia Board Member, Jemma O’Hanlon said.

“Investing in prevention will make Victorians healthier into the future and will lead to a stronger economy and resilient health system. With a return of $14 for every $1 spent, investing in prevention and health promotion is an investment for a more sustainable future,” Co-President of Australian Health Promotion Association Victoria David Towl said.

“While increased investment in preventive health is the long game, the priority recommendation for Victoria is new legislation that restricts all advertising for unhealthy food and beverages on public transport, in public open spaces and within 500m of schools,” Associate Professor Sacks said.

“We need investments and policy improvements that enable Victorians to eat well, a nutritious diet goes a long way to reducing the risk of many preventable diseases including heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and some cancers,” Nutrition Australia CEO Lucinda Hancock said.

“The only way to enact real change, and support Victorians to lead healthy and active lives, while reducing the increasing burden on the state’s health system, is to act earlier, to enhance prevention measures and intervene before it's too late,” Exercise & Sports Science Australia CEO Anita Hobson-Powell said.

“Dedicating 5% of total annual health expenditure towards better access to preventive health services, including exercise physiology, will help build a healthier and stronger economy.”

This media release was issued in collaboration with Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation, Dietitians Australia, Nutrition Australia, Public Health Association of Australia, Australian Health Promotion Association and Exercise & Sports Science Australia.

Media enquiries

For media enquiries and interviews, contact 0409 661 920.