

16 December 2021

National Preventive Health Strategy launched

On Monday 12 December 2021 the Australian Government launched its [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030](#). The Strategy, launched by Health Minister Greg Hunt, provides a 10-year plan that seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians at all stages of life. It represents one pillar (alongside mental health) of the government's [Long Term National Health Plan](#), released in 2019.

The Strategy is the result of several years of work by the federal government and the expert steering committee, made up of representatives of health peak bodies and individuals with expertise in specific areas. The VHA provided a submission in May 2021 arguing that national policy should align and support state-based approaches to prevention.

The VHA welcome the Strategy's focus on a life-course approach to health, the emphasis on achieving health equity in priority populations (including a focus on telehealth and rural health) and increasing government investment in prevention.

The Strategy is framed around a series of aims, principles, enablers and focus areas which range from the very broad (all Australians live in good health for as long as possible) to the specific (improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet).

Key commitments

Key commitments in the Strategy include:

- a national goal for prevention to reach 5 per cent of total health expenditure across Commonwealth, state and territory governments by 2030
- focused effort in the areas of tobacco control, cancer screening, reducing overweight and obesity, immunisation, reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs and promoting mental health
- a new evidence-based mechanism for setting spending priorities
- a focus on developing the capacity of the public health workforce in areas of unmet need
- developing a national consumer engagement strategy and health literacy strategy.

The VHA is pleased to see that the Strategy acknowledges the importance of multi-sector collaboration, enabling the public health workforce, adapting to emerging threats and evidence and community voice. These principles align with the VHA's state-wide [Prevention and Health Promotion Network](#) (launched in November 2021), which will provide a mechanism to support the success of the National Preventive Health Strategy in the Victorian context.

It positive to see the Strategy make refence to the impact of the social, environmental, economic, cultural and biomedical determinants of health, and reference learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the strategy does not clearly articular how it will address the determinants of health that lie outside the direct responsibility of the health portfolio, such as poverty, inequality, racism and the environment, or how learnings from the pandemic can be translated into action to support the nation's recovery efforts.

What's next?

In the 2021-22 Federal Budget it was announced that \$1.9 million would be put towards the initial implementation of the Strategy.

This will include the development of a Blueprint for Action to guide implementation and the creation of an evidence-based Prioritisation Framework.

Throughout 2022 and beyond, the VHA will advocate for bipartisan support and full implementation of the Strategy. We will also continue to work closely with our key partners to ensure that the needs of the Victorian community and healthcare system are reflected throughout the Strategy's implementation.



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