

Australian Council of Social Service

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National Preventive Health Taskforce
Commonwealth Department of Health

NPHS@health.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Draft National Preventive Health Strategy

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) is a national voice in support of people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality and the peak body for the community services and civil society sector. ACOSS consists of a network of approximately 4000 organisations and individuals across Australia in metro, regional and remote areas. Our vision is an end to poverty in all its forms; economies that are fair, sustainable and resilient; and communities that are just, peaceful and inclusive.

ACOSS welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the draft National Preventive Health Strategy. Overall, we consider that the draft strategy is a well-structured and considered strategy, which contains a strong vision, aims and principles. There are a number of elements that we consider have particular merit, including:

- The aims and targets – ACOSS considers that a focus on prevention in the early years, people living as long as possible in good health, health equity and investment in prevention are critical. In particular, ACOSS was heartened to see that the draft strategy targets that investment in preventive health will increase to 5% of all health spending by 2030.
- The focus on the social and other determinants of health as the key drivers of health outcomes – the “causes of the causes”. We particularly welcome the identification of economic determinants as some of the most influential factors affecting health and wellbeing, and of income as a key economic determinant of health.
- The key learnings from the draft strategy, particularly the learning that “to have real impact, prevention needs to be financed”.

Despite the strength of the draft strategy, we do consider that there are some areas where it could be improved, including:

- Chronic disease screening and detection. While the draft strategy does focus on cancer screening and prevention, there are a broad range of chronic diseases that would benefit from a renewed focus on risk assessment and screening to detect and manage them, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.
- Environmental factors and climate change. While the draft strategy recognises climate change “is likely to be the biggest challenge to health, wellbeing and economic prosperity”, it does not propose any action to mitigate the health risks of it. This is a missed opportunity.

This draft strategy, if approved, would be a significant step forward for preventive health in Australia. Of course its success is inextricably linked to whether it is properly financed. Central to that is the aim that funding for preventive health will rise to 5% of health spending by 2030. We look forward in particular to this aim being achieved.

Should the taskforce wish to seek further information from ACOSS please contact Dr John Mikelsons, Senior Advisor (Community Services and Health) on 02 9310 6212 or john@acoss.org.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Edwina MacDonald'.

Edwina MacDonald
Deputy CEO