

Media Release

Public Health Association of Australia

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New report makes case for preventing chronic diseases, rather than spending billions on treatment

The Public Health Association of Australia urges the Australian Government to invest in actions that prevent people developing many chronic diseases, as new figures show the cost of treating such illnesses rose by \$13b in one year.

The peak body's comments follow the release of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Health system spending on disease and injury in Australia 2022–23* report.

That report estimated spending on treating disease increased by \$13 billion (in current prices) to \$172.3 billion in 2022–23, up from \$159.3 billion in 2021–22, representing an overall growth of 8.2% in current prices.

Almost half (48% of all disease spending, or \$82 billion) went to chronic diseases, with cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and musculoskeletal disorders comprising the top three disease groups for most of the period 2013-14 to 2022-23, the AIHW report said.

Prostate cancer, non-melanoma skin cancer, breast cancer, and bowel cancer comprised the top four specific cancers by spending for each year between 2013–14 and 2022–23, the report added.

PHAA CEO, Adj Prof Terry Slevin, said the report demonstrates there's a public health case to prevent many of these cases of chronic diseases.

"In addition to the harms of these preventable diseases, each person living with such conditions experiences pain, suffering, a lower quality of life, and, in too many cases, premature death," Adj Prof Slevin said.

"This reinforces the need to invest in prevention.

"Just \$2 in every \$100 spent on health goes to public health. We've got to revisit that, if for no other reason than the inexorable, growing cost of managing these preventable diseases.

"We strongly encourage the Australian Government to boost investment to 5 per cent of total health expenditure on prevention. This will help ease pressures on our hospital systems in the future, but also means people will live healthier, and for longer."

For further information/comment:

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About the Public Health Association of Australia

We're Australia's peak body for public health and advocate for the health and wellbeing of everyone. We strive to help prevent – rather than cure – illness and disease. Our campaigns and activities span numerous public health issues from environmental health, immunisation and pandemic control, through to tobacco, gambling, physical activity, junk food marketing, preventive mental health, health education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Our 2,000+ individual members represent over 40 professional groups interested in the promotion of public health. We also have branches in every State and Territory.

Learn more at phaa.net.au

