

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



Media Release

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Health groups welcome commitment to tackle chronic disease across Pacific

Leading Australian and international health groups have welcomed the Australian Government's announcement that it will increase its assistance to tackle chronic diseases across the Pacific.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard committed \$25million over four years to help prevent and treat chronic diseases which are a leading cause of death and disability in the region.

"Chronic diseases, many of which are preventable, are at crisis point in the Pacific," said Dr Lyn Roberts, CEO of the Heart Foundation, speaking on behalf of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

"We're really pleased that this is acknowledged by the Australian Government and that they are continuing to support a critical program to address the immense social and economic toll these diseases take on the people of the Pacific."

Chronic diseases – or non-communicable diseases (NCDs) include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases. These conditions are responsible for 36 million deaths worldwide, with 80% occurring in low and middle-income countries.

Around eight million NCD deaths a year in low and middle income nations occur in people under 60, taking an immense social and economic toll on families and emerging economies.

"This new funding will enable the continuation of a vital program to improve health services and raise public awareness about the effects of alcohol and tobacco as well as the benefits of healthy nutrition and regular exercise," Dr Roberts said.

"The program will also benefit other chronic conditions such as kidney disease, which share the same risk factors," she said.

Ann Keeling, Chair of the international NCD Alliance and CEO of the International Diabetes Federation also welcomed the news.

"Australia is already acknowledged as a world leader in preventive health and in providing assistance to developing countries to tackle NCDs. With this pledge they have set an example for other aid donors to follow. Investing now in NCD prevention and control will save many billions of dollars in years to come," she said.

The Prime Minister's announcement at the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland, New Zealand comes ahead of a United Nations summit on NCDs in New York on 19-20 September.

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Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance members: Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; KidneyHealth Australia; Heart Foundation; National Stroke Foundation.