

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



Media Release

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MEDICAL RESEARCH NEEDS TO BE PROTECTED

Australia's leading chronic disease organisations have today called on the Australian Government to protect, not plunder, its investment in medical research, following suggestions that funding for the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) program could be cut in the upcoming Federal Budget

Speaking on behalf of CEOs representing cancer, heart, stroke, diabetes and kidney health NGOs, Professor Greg Johnson, Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, stressed that medical research is a fundamental part of the health system, not an optional extra.

"Many thousands of Australians alive today owe their lives to breakthroughs and advances made by research funded by the NHMRC over many decades," Professor Johnson said.

"Much of our life expectancy gains this century can be attributed to medical research and subsequent advances in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

"Investing in health and medical research is critical if we want to reduce the future healthcare costs of treating our burgeoning rates of chronic disease which are expected to triple to over \$40 billion dollars annually within 20 years," Professor Johnson said.

"It also keeps our research talent at home rather than forcing them to go overseas, taking their research and potential discoveries with them."

"To date, the Government has placed a great deal of importance on research and we hope that this legacy will continue in the 2011-12 Federal Budget.

"We also hope the Australian Government continues its excellent health initiatives in prevention, support for Indigenous health and its far-reaching reforms of the Australian system of healthcare."

"Rather than cut funding for health and research, the Government should look at other options, such as axing the sale of duty free cigarettes, a move supported by the Henry Tax Review that could add as much as \$200m a year to the Budget bottom line."

Prof Ian Olver, CEO, Cancer Council Australia

Dr Lyn Roberts, CEO, National Heart Foundation of Australia

Dr Erin Lalor, CEO, National Stroke Foundation

Mr Lewis Kaplan, CEO, Diabetes Australia

Ms Anne Wilson, CEO, Kidney Health Australia

Prof Greg Johnson, Chair, Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance

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