

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 1 March, 2010

New study highlights need to boost chronic disease prevention

The nation's largest independent disease prevention groups have called on the government to implement a comprehensive national obesity strategy following the release of a new study showing that obesity and overweight costs Australians \$21 billion a year plus \$35.6 billion dollars in government subsidies.

"This study highlights the direct costs to both individuals and the government of the escalating rates of overweight and obesity in our society," said Professor Ian Olver, Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance following the publication of the study in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

"An individual who is obese faces double the direct costs and costs the government 67% more in subsidies compared to a person of normal weight," Professor Olver said.

"This is because being overweight or obese substantially increases your risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and some cancers."

"With two out of three adults and one in four children in Australia now overweight or obese and the rate continuing to rise, we simply cannot afford to delay taking comprehensive action," Professor Olver said.

"Back in June 2009, the Government's own National Preventative Health Taskforce recommended a comprehensive multi-sector strategy to tackle our burgeoning obesity rates that is strongly supported by public health groups.

"Yet eight months later we have yet to see the Government act on this report and legislation to establish a prevention agency languishes in the Senate," he said.

"With COAG due to discuss health reform at its upcoming meeting, I strongly urge all parties to put the health of Australians first and get on with the job of implementing the preventive health strategy recommended by the Taskforce," Professor Olver said.

"With an extra 10,000 Australians becoming overweight or obese each month we simply can't afford to delay comprehensive action any further."

Media contacts: Franca Marine 02 8063 4112 or 0432 567 413
franca.marine@cancer.org.au

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance comprises: Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the National Stroke Foundation.